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Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, October 5, 1892.

No. 31. { COMPLETE. } FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 31 & 36 NORTH MOORE STREET, NEW YORK. { PRICE } **Vol. II**
New York, April 22, 1893. ISSUED WEEKLY. { 5 CENTS. }

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Frank Reade, Jr., in the Clouds. By "NONAME."



Down, down went both Pomp and the eagle. Filled with unspeakable horror at his doom, the poor fellow held on. Just why he did so he himself didn't know.

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FRANK READE, JR., IN THE CLOUDS

By "NONAME,"

Author of "Frank Reade, Jr.'s New Electric Invention the 'Warrior'; or, Fighting the Apaches in Arizona," etc.

PROLOGUE.

SEVERAL years ago one of the most remarkable geniuses of the age came into notice through a series of wonderful inventions which soon sent his name to the uttermost parts of the earth. His genius seemed to have come from a double source—inheritance and inspiration. To the readers of THE BOYS OF NEW YORK his name is a household word—FRANK READE, JR.—and of all inventors of the age he is their favorite. To them it is not necessary to speak of him and his perilous adventures. But to the new reader, who takes up our paper for the first time, we deem it proper to say something in regard to this famous young inventor and world-renowned traveler.

Many years ago, Frank Reade, Sr., invented a Steam Man, which was the wonder of the day. He attached the Steam Man to a wagon and drove him across the plains of the West.

After a series of daring adventures, he returned and invented a Steam Horse, with which he performed still more wonderful feats.

In all his adventures he was accompanied by his two faithful servants, Barney O'Shea, a brave, rollicking son of Erin, and Pomp, a black son of Africa, whose head proved to be one of the most dangerous battering rams the savages of the plains had ever seen or heard of.

Well, like most great men, Frank Reade fell in love with a beautiful girl and married her. After that he settled down, and would travel no more. A son was born to them—Frank, Jr.—and he inherited his father's inventive genius, and more besides.

As soon as he was able to handle a tool, he began making things which had never been made before, and when he left college with a first-class education, he turned his attention to inventions.

The first invention was the Steam Wonder, a locomotive to run by steam, without tracks, on the level prairies.

Pomp and Barney went with him over the old stage routes of the plains, and in a series of terrific fights with red-skins and road-agents, cleaned them out so completely, that they gave the government and travelers very little trouble afterwards. Then followed the Electric Tricycle, the Electric Boat, and several others, with which he explored the North and South American Continents, rescuing many people from perilous situations, and making a fortune that was princely in amount. In all his travels Barney and Pomp accompanied him, and their adventures and hair-breadth escapes would fill volumes. Their names thus became known along with that of the young inventor.

CHAPTER I.

PROF. GRIMM AND THE AIR-SHIP.

It was a bright, cheery morning in June that saw Frank Reade, Jr., seated in a handsome phaeton, driven by old black Pomp, the faithful old servant of the young inventor, on his way to the little depot in Readestown, to meet the incoming train from Chicago. He was in great good humor, and his handsome face was wreathed in smiles, as though pleasing thoughts filled his mind. Even honest old Pomp wore a broad grin on his black face as he drove the beautiful span of bays at a dashing pace through the town.

"Drive fast, Pomp," said Frank, looking at his watch. "You have only two minutes to meet the train."

"Yes, sah. Dese horses can beat dat train suah," said Pomp, urging the bays to a faster pace.

"I believe they can, Pomp," returned Frank,

laughing good-naturedly. "Some day we'll give the train a trial. You can have a ten-mile stretch along the side of the track on the south section."

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'," grinned Pomp. "Dem hosses kin beat dat train sure's you're born, Marse Frank. Whoa, dar! Heah comes de train!"

The team dashed up to the little depot about one minute ahead of the train, and Frank sprang out to the platform, leaving Pomp in charge of the horses. As the train dashed up and came to a halt, Frank made his way round to the front side, and stood quietly among a party of ladies and gentlemen, residents of Readestown, who had come out to meet or part with friends.

A number of people got on and off the train, and a minute later the conductor called out:

"All aboard!"

There was a fluttering among passengers and spectators for a moment or two, and then the train moved off again.

A tall, dark man, with grizzled beard and attenuated frame, was seen standing among the new arrivals, and looking around as if in search of some one.

The moment Frank caught a glimpse of him he sprang forward, and grasping his hand, exclaimed:

"Why, how are you, professor? Welcome to Readestown. I was looking for you!"

"Ah, Mr. Reade!" returned the professor. "Thanks for your kindness. I got your telegram and came on at once. You are looking well."

"I am in splendid health and spirits," returned Frank. "Where's your baggage?"

"Here—this valise," and he pointed down to a valise at his feet.

"Come on, then, and we'll go up to the house at once," and the famous young inventor led the way round to the other side of the depot, where Pomp was waiting for them with the team of bays. The professor followed him, and in another minute both were seated behind Pomp, and dashing through the town in very gay style.

"Did you have a pleasant trip, professor?" Frank asked, as they turned into Reade avenue.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "Never had a more pleasant one in my life. The truth is, I was so overjoyed that you had at last completed your ship that I could think of nothing else on the way."

"You didn't enjoy the scenery on the route, then?"

"Scenery! I never saw any, my dear young friend."

Frank burst into a hearty fit of laughter, to the no small astonishment of the professor, who glared at him through a pair of big-eyed spectacles.

"You must indeed have been absorbed not to have seen and admired the beautiful scenery between here and Chicago," remarked the young inventor, as soon as he could stop laughing, "for the low but rolling country is just now clothed in the richest green, decked with flowers of all the hues of the rainbow."

"Seems to me I did see some flowers and green grass on the way," said the professor, a faint smile on his grim face, "but I took no notice of them. I was thinking of something else at the time."

"Of course you were—of icebergs and the North Pole, and an open sea, and all that."

"Yes—yes!" and the professor's face lighted up with a sudden enthusiasm as he thought of the one great dream of his life. "How could I think of anything else just now? We are going to open the sealed book of Nature for the first time since the world began. Our names will go

down in history as greater than any from Adam to the end of time."

"Ah! Professor," exclaimed Frank, laughing good-naturedly, "you are as full of enthusiasm as ever, I see."

"Why shouldn't I be? My faith in you and your inventive genius stands unshaken. We will solve the problem. We will bid defiance to icebergs, and storm and frost, and—"

"Well, I don't know about that, professor," remarked Frank, interrupting him.

The professor looked hard at him for a moment or two, as if he were amazed at seeing him have any doubts at all, and was about to say something, when Pomp called out:

"Whoa, dar! whoa, sah! Hyer yer is, Marse Frank."

The phaeton had stopped in front of the handsome residence of the young inventor, which stood some three hundred yards beyond that of his father's.

"Here we are, professor," said Frank, alighting, and assisting the tall, gaunt professor to alight. "Get out and come in. You will be better when you have had a bath and lunch."

The professor alighted and followed Frank into the house, carrying his valise with him.

"Let me have your valise," said Frank, attempting to take it from his hand.

"Better let me carry that," replied the professor. "I am better acquainted with its contents than you are."

"All right. Any dynamite in it, eh?"

"No—I don't call it by that name."

Frank stared at him.

"Something as bad, eh?"

The professor smiled.

"Better leave it in an outhouse," he suggested; "it might do damage."

"No danger of that," and he smiled again. "I'll keep charge of it myself."

At the door two little children—a boy and girl—ran forward, and were instantly caught up in Frank's arms.

"These are my little ones, professor," he said, kissing them tenderly.

"Ah! and beauties they are," replied the professor, chucking them under their chins. "I hope they may both live to see their father's name honored all round the world."

"Thank you. I have hoped that much myself," said Frank, laughing heartily as he stood the little ones down on their feet again.

"Your hopes will all be realized, my friend. Never fear that," and the professor followed him up-stairs to the room that had been set apart for his use when it was known that he was coming.

Frank left him there, and went down-stairs to see his wife. He found her looking sad and despondent.

"My darling," he said, as he stood by her side, "What's the matter? You know that Professor Grimm has come."

"Yes, Frank, and his coming fills me with unutterable woe. It means that in a little while now you will leave us to be gone a long time."

"Not half as long as you think, dear," said he, stealing an arm around her waist and kissing her. "You know that up in the air we can travel much faster than on land or water. I will soon return."

"Ah! That's what you say, and I know you will if you can," she said, "but God has forbidden man to invade the silence of His frozen domains, and only disaster has come to those who dared to do it."

"You look at it from a wrong stand-point, dear, and—"

"I look at it through the grand vision of my

“When my idol goes where he goes before him had perished, it is no wonder he is alarmed,” and she laid her head on his shoulder and wept soft, silent tears of sorrow and undefined fear.

Barney may understand the situation, that the great fame of our hero's inventions, and the wonderful success of his exploits, as well as the glamour of his exploits, might many strange offers to him from all parts of the world.

About two years previous to the opening of our story, he received a letter from one whose name was not entirely unknown to him. It read as follows:

“NEW YORK, June 5, 18—.

“DEAR SIR,—Another expedition to the North Pole has proven a disastrous failure. Lives of gallant men have been lost, and the mystery still remains unsolved. Those who go down to the sea in ships will never be able to solve it. The Frozen Kingdom is still locked in a wall of ice, and the existence of an open Polar Sea remains in doubt. To him who scales the walls of King Frost, and gives to the world the knowledge it seeks, honor and riches will be given, and an eternity of fame shall rest on his name.

“I have been authorized by the American Academy of Science to make you an offer in her name which, I hope, will receive your deepest consideration. I have never had the honor of your acquaintance, but the fame of your inventions and exploits has challenged my admiration and held it for years. The offer is this:

“Build an air-ship, and pilot her through the air to the North Pole, with your humble servant on board, and then name the price of your services, which will be paid by the Academy.

Please let me hear from you by return mail, if possible, and oblige

“Your very humble servant,
“ALEXANDER GRIMM,
“Professor of Geographical Science.”

The reception of that letter set the young inventor to thinking. The *Jeannette* had been crushed in the ice, and nearly the whole of her crew had come back in coffins. The eyes of the whole world had been drawn toward them, and all hearts had been touched by the story of their sufferings. Baffled though they were, scientific men the world over still hungered for knowledge concerning that great frozen region.

“The ships of the sea can't scale the icebergs,” said Frank to himself, after reading the professor's letter. “But an air-ship can. I see no reason why I cannot fly over the North Pole and pass down on the other side of the globe. I'll talk to the professor about it anyhow.”

He telegraphed to him in New York to meet him at the Palmer House in Chicago on Wednesday.

In less than two hours an answer came: “I'll be there.”

The two men met for the first time in that magnificent hotel and talked the matter over for two whole days. The young inventor found the professor full of enthusiasm over the subject, and thoroughly versed in scientific lore.

“It will take me fully two years to develop and test such a ship as I would have to build, professor,” said Frank, after they had talked the matter over together.

“That will be time enough,” was the reply; “and you can draw on the faculty of the academy for every dollar of expense.”

“Which I won't do,” said Frank.

“Why not?”

“Because then it would belong to the academy.

The ship must be my own.”

“As well as the honors of the expedition,” suggested the professor, smiling.

“Well, yes, if you put it that way. But, as you will be the scientific man of the expedition, and I only the engineer of the ship, the honor of any new discovery will rest with you.”

“Oh, no. But for you success would be impossible.”

“Well, we'll go together,” and then they shook hands and laughed over the matter.

When they parted the next day it was with the understanding that Frank would go to work at once on the air-ship that was to solve the problem of the century.

Once more alone, our hero sat himself down to think. There were few men who could concentrate their thoughts with more intensity than he. He sat up all night, pencil in hand, poring over drawings and diagrams on a table. He went over all the old drawings of previous inventions of his, discarding many things, improving some, and making others wholly new.

At last he completed a drawing of what he wanted, and then threw himself on the bed, much exhausted, and fell asleep. He slept all during

the day, dreaming of Polar seas and mountains of ice and snow.

When he awoke he was as fresh as ever, and, strange to say, as full of enthusiasm over the project as the professor himself. He had caught the fever, and already he imagined the whole world singing his praises for having overcome all that had hitherto baffled the best navigators of the world.

Before leaving Chicago, he made up his mind to build the air-ship at Readestown, where he could be with his wife and children, as well as have the benefit of his father's advice in many things. Having decided on that, he proceeded to employ skilled workmen, whose names he knew, and bargained with them to go out to his home and do the work. Those who had worked for him before were glad to get a chance to do so again. There were no better pay-masters than he; and every man who ever worked with him caught some of the fire of his inventive genius, which was of immense benefit to him.

The workmen engaged, the next thing to do was to buy all the material necessary to build the air-ship. This was a task that required much judgment and plenty of time. He had to consult the drawings and select every piece one by one, and to do that required more than a week's time.

But he finally made the purchases, paid for them, and ordered their shipment to Readestown. Then he took the train for home, and was soon again in the bosom of his family.

The next morning he selected a spot of ground in the rear of his lot for the ship-yard. This he had inclosed with a high board fence, which could not be scaled by the small boy, nor peeped through by the prying ones. Just what he was going to do he kept a secret from everybody save his wife and father. To them he revealed his plans under the promise of secrecy.

The fence went up, and the material for the enterprise came down on the train. Pomp and Barney O'Shea hauled them to the ship-yard in one of the farm-wagons, and looked wise whenever any one questioned them. Of course they didn't know anything about it, but they managed to make everybody about town believe that the young inventor had given them his fullest confidence. The work went on, and week after week and month after month Frank toiled with the workmen, testing each new idea, and making calculations that made their heads swim. At last the thing was finished, and a telegram was sent to Professor Grimm to come on at once.

CHAPTER II.

FRANK EXPLAINS THE AIR-SHIP.

WHEN Professor Grimm came down to dinner, an hour after his arrival, he found Frank Reade, Jr., and his father waiting for him. Frank Reade, Sr., and the professor were about the same age. Both were men whose names were well known in the scientific world. They had never met before, and when Frank introduced them they eyed each other closely as they shook hands.

“I have heard of you, sir,” remarked the professor.

“And your name is quite familiar to me, sir,” returned the father of Frank.

“While your son has sent his around the world,” added the new-comer. “He is a worthy son of a worthy sire.”

Both Frank and his father colored somewhat at the earnest compliment from the man of science, and felt quite embarrassed for a minute or two. Frank finally remarked:

“After such a speech as that you must feel hungry, professor. Come in and have dinner with us,” and he turned to lead the way into the dining-room.

“Well, the speech didn't make me particularly hungry,” said the professor, laughing, as he followed him out of the parlor; “but I well know that vital forces will decay if one does not eat.”

“That's so,” replied Frank; “vitals and victuals keep close relationship, I believe.”

“Yes—the relationship of mind and matter,” added Frank Reade, Sr., laughing, “which culminates in the chemical laboratory of the stomach. You see, we are well up in the science here, professor.”

A hearty laugh followed, and then, as they entered the dining-room, the new-comer was introduced to the young inventor's wife and mother.

The dinner over, the three men went out into the “ship-yard” to look at the air-ship. Pomp and Barney were on hand, but no one else was allowed inside the inclosure.

As he entered the yard the professor looked hard at Pomp and Barney. He instinctively knew them as the faithful companions of the young inventor in his many perilous voyages.

There was nothing of the aristocrat about him, so he walked over to the Irishman, and extending his hand toward him, said:

“You are Barney, the gallant Irishman who has so long stood by Mr. Reade; I am glad to see you, my friend.”

Barney was amazed at the condescension. Off went his hat, and a broad grin spread round his jolly Celtic face. He grasped the professor's outstretched hand, and exclaimed:

“Be me soul but its a rale gentleman ye are, an' its Barney O'Shea as is glad ter say it.”

“Thank you, Barney,” returned the professor. “Everybody in America has heard of you, and—”

“Bedad!” exclaimed Barney, interrupting him with true Celtic enthusiasm, “thin the byes in ould Ireland heard it, too, I'm thinking.”

“Oh, yes. The people in Ireland generally hear all the news in America.”

“Faith ye are roight, sur. Ireland is a great country.”

“A wonderful country. Ah! That's Pomp, I am sure. Who has not heard of honest old Pomp and his hard head! How are you, my friend?” and he grasped Pomp's hand and shook it heartily, to the evident surprise of Pomp himself.

“I see well, I is, boss,” said Pomp, grinning like a cat-fish. “How yer folks at home?”

“Very well, indeed, thanks,” replied the professor, whilst Frank and his father looked on with no little amusement at the actions of the famous professor.

“Rather eccentric, I think,” remarked the elder Reade to his son.

“Yes, somewhat. Most scientific men are, I believe,” said Frank.

“Yes, I've heard so.”

The professor having made the acquaintance of Barney and Pomp, now turned to Frank and said:

“I am at your service.”

“There's the ship,” said Frank, pointing toward the magnificent result of his two years' work, as it stood on a platform that had been prepared for it.

The professor stared at the wonder in profound silence for several minutes, and then turned to our hero and said:

“I have confidence enough in your inventive skill to believe that you have invented everything necessary to the success of the expedition. But you will have to explain it to me. I never saw any of your inventions before, and so know nothing about this one. It looks like a wonderful piece of mechanism, and I presume it is,” and he again turned and gazed at the air-ship, as it stood on the little platform.

It was, indeed, a wonderful piece of mechanism. As it stood there, it had the appearance of a little yacht of some thirty feet in length, as trim and neat as any ever launched in the water. It had a depth of something like four feet, with a cabin amidship, with two tall, slender masts rising out of it some six or seven feet from the ends. At the bow was a large, fan-like rudder for steering, and in the rear was the propeller. But it was not so heavy. It was light, being made of thin layers of maple. Each layer was laid across the grain of the other and securely fastened, so there could be no ripping or splitting. The blades were curved to the proper degree to secure the greatest amount of speed. They made a circle of twenty feet when they revolved, reaching far below the bottom of the ship. But it was made to fold up when the ship was on the ground, and raised out of the way.

All this the professor took in at a glance, during which time the young inventor and his father kept their eyes riveted on him.

“How much does it weigh, Mr. Reade?” he asked, after a lapse of several minutes.

“Just four hundred and seventy pounds,” was the reply.

“Is that all?”

“Every ounce.”

“Well, it looks as if it might weigh at least two thousand pounds.”

“So it does. But I had an eye to light weight all the time, and I think I have got it down so fine that an ounce could not be spared without injuring its strength.”

“I haven't a doubt of it,” said the professor.

“How many persons can you carry in it?”

“That depends upon the weight of the persons. The lifting power forbids more than two thousand five hundred pounds, including the weight of the ship. She can carry six or eight people of average weight, and supplies, with but little trouble. But as there are to be only four of us we will not have to strain the lifting power to such an extent.”

“Please tell me where the lifting power is?” the professor asked.

“Certainly. Come on board, and we can give the ship a thorough overhauling,” and he went to the starboard side, touched a spring, and an air-

tight door on that side opened, leaving a clear passage for them.

"Ah! that's a wonderful thing," exclaimed the professor. "How nicely it fits in the side! Why, I can't even see where it is jointed!"

"Of course not. You will see greater wonders than that before you get through. Here's the cabin. Plenty of room, you see, and warm beds that defy the chilly atmosphere of the Pole. It is to be heated by electricity, so that a ton of fuel can be carried in a pound bottle."

"Ah, yes, so it can! That is condensing with a vengeance—a ton of fuel in a pound bottle!" and the professor rubbed his hands with unfeigned delight as he gazed around the little cabin with its comfortable arrangements.

"Now here's the lifting power," said Frank, leading the way to the forward mast, a tall, slender rod of steel, so incased in rubber as to protect it from lightning. The mast extended twenty-five feet up, and rested in an inclosed chest in the bottom of the ship.

The professor looked up at the mast in no little surprise.

"Why, that looks like a huge closed umbrella," he said.

"Yes, it opens and shuts like one, save that it revolves in opening. It's a rotascope—both are, and they revolve in opposite directions, so as to keep the ship steady in the air."

"When they open their wings they spread into a circle of eighteen feet in diameter, and can make a thousand revolutions a minute. Here, I will show you how it is done," and Frank went into the cabin and removed a lid from a mahogany box. In that were a number of silver knobs, cranks, and handles. Touching one of the knobs, both masts began to revolve. Powerful electric batteries at their base furnished the power, and in a few moments the great revolving wings began to spread. They were made of the strongest materials, on the principle of the wings of a wind-mill.

As they revolved they forced the wind downwards with the rush of a cyclone.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the dumfounded professor; "such a draught as that will give us our death-colds before we can go one hundred miles from home."

Frank laughed.

"You haven't seen all yet," he said.

And touching another knob, a double-casing slid from both ends of the roof of the cabin, and formed a perfect shelter from the downward rush of air.

"Capital, capital!" exclaimed the professor in unfeigned delight. "I never saw anything like it."

"It wards off the air without adding anything to the resistance," remarked Frank.

"Yes, I see it does."

The rotascopes revolved without lifting the ship from its moorings to enable the professor to catch the *modus operandi* of its working.

The cover was removed from the electric batteries—a pair of which stood at the base of each mast—that they might be seen.

"There are four in all," said Frank, "two of which are kept in reserve for emergencies."

"Sensible," remarked the professor. "You have remarkable foresight, Mr. Reade. I can perceive that."

"Thanks, sir. Now come back into the cabin and see the medicine-chest, provision-chest, and the place for arms, ammunition and clothing. Here's a place, also, for scientific instruments, convenient and handy. There's the apparatus for heating the cabin. Back there is the kitchen, where Pomp will cook everything by the same kind of heat."

"But see here," said the professor, "so much electricity around is very dangerous, you know."

"Yes; but I have got it all under cover so that no accident can happen."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that, for I don't care to get blown to atoms or shocked to death, even in the interest of science. I am very human after all, you see."

"Just my sentiments exactly," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly, "so I have taken good care to be on the safe side. You need not have any fears of death by electricity unless lightning should get after us, and I don't think lightning plays around the North Pole much."

"No, I should say not. It is more complete than I even dreamed of," said the professor.

"You haven't seen all yet. Here are scales on which everything must be weighed. Our own weights must be recorded in a book, as well as everything else. Every pound of food consumed must be weighed before being eaten, so that it can be ascertained in a few minutes how much spare lifting power we have. We must always keep at least 500 pounds of spare power, to be drawn upon when needed. If we have a lifting power of 2,500 pounds, we must not put on more

than 2,000 pounds, including the weight of the ship and everything else, and as I said, a record of every pound must be kept."

"That's business," said the elder Reade, "for then you can always know how much power you have on hand."

"Yes, that's what I am aiming at," replied Frank.

"Stand on the scales there, professor, and let me get your weight now."

The professor stepped on the delicately constructed scales, and tipped the beam at 131 pounds.

"Just one pound less than Barney," said Frank. "Pomp weighs 139, and myself 125, which foots 527 pounds. We will need at least 25 pounds each of heavy arctic clothing, which will make another 100 pounds. Then come 600 pounds of provisions; 100 for arms and ammunition, 80 for tools and 100 for extra materials for repairs—all of which sums up to 1,977 pounds, leaving a margin of 533 pounds."

The professor was amazed at the minute calculations the young inventor had made, and glared at him in profound admiration.

"Have you provided against accidents?" he finally asked.

"Yes, of every kind," was the reply.

"Well, then, I am ready to start whenever you are. But have you bought the proper clothing for that cold climate?"

"I have got everything for three. I thought you would provide for yourself."

"So I did; I have them in my valise. By the way, have you thought of the danger of the ship being covered with ice up in the air under certain conditions of the air?"

"Oh, yes. I have calculated that we will have to beat the ice off every half hour, at certain seasons, as well as pick icicles out of each other's hair."

"De good Lor' sabs us!" groaned Pomp, his eyes growing as big as saucers.

"The saints' perfect us!" ejaculated Barney, crossing himself.

"Look heah, Barney," said Pomp to the Irishman in an undertone, "whar dis heah flyin' ship er gwine?"

"Sorra a wan o' me knows," was the lugubrious reply.

"Marse Frank is gettin' ready for er cold winter, suah."

"Roight ye are, Pqmp, an' its oice they talk about the whole."

Pomp gave a shudder as if a chilly blast from the Pole had struck him. The thought of going into regions of eternal ice sent a cold stream down his spine that set his teeth chattering.

"It's the most wonderful invention of the age, Mr. Reade," said the professor, grasping Frank's hand and shaking it heartily. "I see no reason why it should not be a perfect success in every respect. It will hand your name down to the last generation of mankind."

CHAPTER III.

IN THE AIR.

THE three men remained in the little shipyard, looking at and discussing the many points of the great air-ship, for over an hour. They were all delighted with the vessel so far, and the professor was profuse in his expressions of admiration for it.

They sat under the adjustable roof of the cabin, smoked cigars and talked of adventures in foreign lands. The professor was never tired of hearing Frank talk of his flying trip across the continent, and asked many questions about it. The young inventor answered them to the best of his ability, and laughed at many things that were brought back to mind in speaking about the trip. Barney and Pomp, seated on the edge of the platform on which the ship rested, were silent listeners to all that was said.

"I have made the North Pole a study for years," remarked the professor—"that is, as well as one could study it who had never been there. I have read every book written by Arctic explorers, and analyzed their statements, together with all the atmospheric phenomena, and have thus acquired some little knowledge about it. Of course I shall have the chance to learn more on this trip to the regions of eternal ice. I have longed to see the mountains of ice that float around in those silent seas. By being above them in the air I can let down cords and measure their height. They have been seen as big as mountains and as high. You can judge of their size when I say that there is five times as much under the water as floats above it."

Both Barney and Pomp groaned aloud on the platform. The thought of such a region of ice made them feel sick.

"Bress de Lor!" said Pomp in an undertone,

"I'se mighty sick, Barney, an' can't say how. Youse'll hatter go widout me suah."

"Be the powers av darkness!" exclaimed Barney, "av yez don't go, it's meself as will be shmall-pox, begorra."

Frank burst into a hearty laugh, and overheard them, and said:

"See here, we can't go without you. What's the matter with you any way?"

"I ever take you where I couldn't bring you back. We won't feel the 'cowl,' Barney, because we will have plenty of warm clothes, and a jug of heating fluid along."

"Begorra, thin," said Barney, "I'll be afther goin' wid you to the ither ind av the wurld."

"Oh, I know you will. And how about you, Pomp?"

"I'se er gwine, to, Marse Frank," was the reply of the faithful black.

"Of course you are. I never went anywhere without you, and I don't intend to. When you get too old to travel, I'll settle down and talk you both to death."

Pomp chuckled and Barney grinned, and both made up their minds to go with the expedition.

"You must say nothing about when we are going to any one, understand."

"Yes, sah."

"Niver a worruld will I spake," said Barney. "We don't want a crowd of people coming in on us to see us off," said Frank, "at least, not inside the yard here."

"No, I would rather not be bothered with a crowd," said the professor. "When can we get off?"

"In a few days," replied Frank. "We have to make a purchase of supplies and other things."

"Very well. I'll run down to Chicago and get the few things I need, and then return."

"I'll go down with you," said Frank, "and make my purchases at the same time. We will start to-morrow."

It was thus arranged, and the ship was left in charge of Barney and Pomp, to guard until everything was in readiness for the start.

The next morning Frank and the professor went to Chicago and made their purchases. Two days later they returned, the goods having been sent by express.

Two more days were spent in putting things in their proper places.

Then Frank sent out word to the people of Readstown that the "Eagle," which was the name he had given the air-ship, would start for the North Pole at noon the next day.

The most intense excitement prevailed throughout the town, and hundreds of his friends rushed to his house to dissuade him from going "to his death," as they called the movement. They besieged his house in swarms.

"My friends," said the young inventor, in a little speech to them from the steps of his house, "I know what I am doing. There is no more danger in this expedition than in my former ones. We will come back all right, I hope, and with information that will put a stop to future exploring voyages, which prove so disastrous to human life. That is our object, and we hope to accomplish it. We have built a ship that will take us over the icebergs which have been so fatal to all Arctic explorers. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kind intentions, but you can rest assured that your fears are entirely groundless. We shall return as well and safe as we are now."

The crowd cheered their famous young townsman, and in a little while they went back to their homes to think over this new venture of the young inventor.

The next day was the eventful one of the expedition. It had been telegraphed all over the country the night before that they would start. The country was electrified from one end to the other, and telegrams laden with good wishes came pouring in some two or three hours before they were to start.

But they were too busy to pay any attention to telegrams. Barney and Pomp had taken leave of their friends, and had everything on board. They only waited for Frank and the professor. Frank was taking leave of his wife, children and parents, and the professor was waiting for him.

At last Frank made his appearance in the shipyard, his cheeks wet with tears, and said to the professor:

"I am ready now. The sooner we get away the better."

"Yes—leave-taking is sad and painful sometimes."

They entered the ship, closed the side-door, and looked around.

Everything was in readiness.

Frank set the powerful electric batteries in motion. The rotascopes began revolving in opposite directions.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROFESSOR AND THE BEAR.

THE young inventor had so often settled down in places like that one beneath them, that he found little difficulty in doing so successfully. It was but the repetition of former experiences, and therefore was easily performed.

Just before the ship settled down in the clearing near the water's edge, Frank turned a small crank on the left side of the little engine-chest, and the great blades of the propeller closed up like an old-fashioned umbrella, and elevated itself at an angle of forty-five degrees in the air.

Professor Grimm was in ecstasies at the harmonious working of every part of the light machinery of the air-ship.

"How smoothly she works," he exclaimed, in a burst of genuine enthusiasm. "You handle her like a well-trained horse, and she obeys your touch like a docile horse does an indulgent master."

"Why should not the creature obey the creator?" Frank asked, as he stepped out of the ship.

"Yes, why should it not? But you know the chemist is sometimes destroyed by the subtle fluids he manipulates. The engineer is killed by an explosion of his engine, and so on down through the list."

"Yes, I know, but it is quite sure to be the result of some act of carelessness on the part of the master. Let the master keep a master's hand on his creations, and he will remain the master."

Professor Grimm looked at the young Inventor in some surprise, and said, after a pause of several moments:

"I am at least double your age, my friend, and have seen and read much, but you have taught me a truth in what you have just said. I will not forget it."

"You are disposed to flatter me beyond reason, I fear, professor," said Frank, looking somewhat embarrassed.

"Indeed, I have no desire to do so. What you said was a great truth, which I recognized the moment you uttered it. Do you know, I was uneasy about the descent, I feared some accident would happen; but you settled down as easily as I can sit down on a chair."

Frank laughed.

"May be there is another great truth you have not thought of, professor," he said.

"Pray, what is it?"

"That 'practice makes perfect.'"

"Ah, yes! You have practically demonstrated it. Now suppose a very strong wind was blowing at the time. How would you have managed it?"

"By facing the wind and pushing against, as a boat would in a strong current."

"I see! I see! You have mastered the science of aerial navigation. I have much to learn of you. This is my first voyage, you know. I am not too old to learn, as you will see. This is a wild spot, isn't it?"

"Yes, and just the spot we want."

"Why so?"

"Because we will not be bothered by a crowd of curiosity-seekers."

"So—I see again."

During the conversation between Frank and the professor, Barney and Pomp were busy preparing the camp for the night. Pomp busied himself making a fire, whilst Barney got out some fishing-tackle and started toward the little lake but a few rods from the ship.

The professor was an ardent lover of angling, and as soon as he saw Barney going to the lake with the tackle, he hurried off after him.

"Ah! you are going to catch some fish for supper. Allow me to help you. I am very fond of the sport, and was once rated as a very successful fisherman."

"Begob, thin, yez may thry your luck," said Barney, handing him his tackle. "It's ther gun I'll take an' luk out for ducks."

The professor took the rod and tackle, and hastened to the lake to cast a line. Baiting a hook with the bait that had been brought along in the air-ship, he cast it into the water.

Before it had been a half minute in the water a big four-pound trout snapped at it and was impaled.

Swish!

"Whew!" ejaculated the professor, as he held manfully to the rod. "That's a game one! How he pulls! How he runs! How he thrills me!"

He was a good sportsman, and played the splendid game till the time came to land him, when he drew him out on to the green grass by a dexterous twist of the rod.

"Ah! He's a fine fellow! I wonder if there are many more like him in this water."

He removed the hook, and cast it again.

In just one short minute another and larger one caught it, and another struggle followed.

The professor enjoyed the excitement with the instinct of a true sportsman. In due time he landed the game, and recast his line.

By that time Barney returned with a double-barreled shot-gun on his shoulder, intending to go down the south side of the little lake and get a shot at some ducks he had seen down in that direction.

"Ah, my friend!" said the professor, as Barney came up. "I have not had such sport for years. Just look at those two fine specimens in the grass over there."

Barney gazed at the two splendid trout as they flourished about in the grass, and exclaimed:

"Be me soul, but it's beauties they are!"

"They are, indeed. Ha! I have another one!" and the professor turned and began wrestling with another fish which had fastened itself on his hook.

Barney at that moment caught sight of the covey of ducks, about three or four hundred yards down the south side of the lake, and hastened in that direction to get a shot at them. The professor continued to wrestle with the fish on his hook, which proved to be a very hard one to manage. He was nearly ten minutes trying to land him, and was about to succeed, when he heard Frank cry out to him:

"Look out, professor!"

Something in Frank's tone induced the professor to turn his head to see what the trouble was.

To his horror, he saw a huge black bear devouring one of his fine trout. The beast made a savage growl as he looked at the Professor, and seemed to be half inclined to make a meal of him as well as the fish.

The sight was too much for the man of science.

It was the first time in all his life that he had ever seen a real wild bear in his native haunts, and the shock was a terrible one to him.

He gave a yell that might have been heard a mile or more, dropped the rod, and took to his heels.

The bear being between him and the air-ship, he put out after Barney down along the south shore of the lake.

Frank and Pomp being behind him, the bear evidently thought it best to run in the same direction, so he put off after the professor, growling as he went.

"Help!—help! Kill him! Kill him off! Keep him off!" yelled the Professor, at the top of his voice.

Barney heard him and saw him coming.

"Phwat's the matther wid him?" he exclaimed, stopping and gazing at the man of science, whose speed of foot cast dignity to the winds.

"Shoot him—kill him!" screamed the fugitive, as he dashed down the clearing. "Don't let him catch me!"

"Holy mither o' Moses!" ejaculated Barney. "It's clane daft he is!"

Just then he caught a glimpse of the black object that was pursuing the professor.

At first he did not know what it was, and in his superstition was about to cross himself and call on all the saints in the calendar, when he recognized the bear.

He had killed bears, and even fiercer animals, before, and was not much afraid of them, particularly when he was armed, as in this instance.

He brought the gun down and prepared to fire, when the professor bounded past him. The bear rushed forward to within ten feet of him, and rose on his hind feet. He seemed to have the perception to perceive that he would have to fight this one, who would not fly from him.

As he rose on his hind feet, Barney aimed at his head and fired both barrels.

They were loaded with buckshot, and the result was bad—for the bear.

His head was shot almost entirely from his shoulders, and he rolled over on the grass in the agonies of death.

"You have saved my life!" exclaimed the grateful professor, rushing forward and grasping Barney's hand.

"Sorra a bit av it," was the reply; "sure an' no bear could iver catch up wid the loikes av yez."

"I could not have gone much farther," said the professor; "I never ran so fast before in all my life."

"You settled him neatly, Barney," said Frank, as he came up and gazed at the brute giving his last gasps.

"Sure, and didn't he stand up to it loike the foinc baste he is!" said Barney.

"Yes—he saw that you were not going to run, and so he stood up for a fight. We can now have some bear-steak for supper. Do you think you could enjoy a steak from him, professor?"

The professor was pretty well winded, having made some two or three hundred yards in his quick race, and was almost out of breath.

and faster they turned, till it seemed the downward rush of wind would crush in of over the cabin.

Suddenly Pomp exclaimed:

"Up she goes!"

She began to ascend.

And she ascended rapidly when she started.

Up a few hundred feet in the air the party looked down over the town, and saw that the whole population had turned out to wave them a good send off.

Handkerchiefs waved everywhere, and a roar of hearty cheers came up to them as they ascended higher and higher above the town.

"How high will we go?" the professor asked, a little tremulously.

"About a half mile or so, and then we will strike a due north course," was the reply.

That altitude was soon reached, and then the bow of the ship was turned northward, and the propeller wheel in the stern began to revolve. The professor felt the wind cutting against his face, and knew that the ship was making a good speed in the right direction.

He leaned over the side of the ship and looked down at the broad expanse of earth beneath him. Beautiful rolling prairies, splendid farms and villages here and there, with white houses and great brown barns.

The railroad tracks glistened like threads of silver in the sun, and far away in the distance was heard the roar of a long freight train that was coming toward the town. Away on in advance lay a river, whose sheeny bosom glistened like a stream of molten silver.

"Ah! What a grand scene all this is," said the enraptured man of science. "No man knows, neither can the mind conceive, of the beauties mine eyes this day behold. It is not new to you, but it is to me."

"Yes," said Frank, "I knew you would enjoy it. There's nothing like it in all the world."

"It's worth ten years of mundane life to see this! Ah! give me my telescope. I think I can see the great lakes from here."

"No, no; not the lakes. They are too far away, professor."

The man of science seized his spy-glass, and leveled it in the direction he had indicated. He gazed long and silently, and then said:

"You are right; it is not the lake, but a pond of water. The glitter of the sun's reflection deceived me."

"Yes—you will know the lakes when you see them. They spread out to such illimitable extent that you will think you are gazing on the ocean."

"I suppose so," and the man of science turned the glass in other directions and gazed at places whose beauties impressed him.

So great was the speed of the air-ship that the scene below was an ever-changing one—like a grand moving panorama. One could never grow tired gazing upon it. The professor certainly did not.

Miles piled upon miles till Readestown and its surroundings could no longer be seen. Towns and cities passed in review, the entire population turning out to gaze at the air-ship as it rushed forward on its course.

"Shall we travel all night?" the professor asked of Frank.

"Just as you wish," was the reply. "We can go on, or camp on *terra firma*."

"Then let us go down at sunset in some quiet place, and spend the night there," he said. "I am afraid that I will get no sleep at such an elevation on the first night."

"Very well; we will go down on the banks of some lake, pond or stream, where we can have a game supper."

"Ah! that would be glorious! I would like nothing better than that!"

Frank then began to look out for a suitable place for a camp. The sun was yet an hour high, and they could make many miles before twilight set in.

At last he espied a place on the banks of a wild lake where a clearing of a few acres afforded room for a descent.

"There's a good place," he said to the professor. "We can have fish and game for supper down there, and have a snug house to sleep in besides."

"Where's the house?" the professor asked.

"This cabin here."

"Ah, yes! I see. I didn't think of that. Can you get down there as safely as you rise up?"

"Oh, yes," and touching the proper knobs, the propeller was stopped, the rudder veered round, and as a result the *Eagle* hovered over the very spot.

Then the revolutions of the rotascopes were slackened, the ship began to settle down slowly toward the earth.

He looked at the black brute, now still in death, and gave a shudder.

"I don't think I could," he said; "I'm afraid I've had all my appetite scared out of me."

Frank laughed.

"Oh, that will come back to you by the time you get the fragrance of the coffee and steaks. In a short race I'd like to back you against all comers for all I am worth. I never saw such running on two feet in my life before."

"Don't laugh," said the professor; "wait till to-morrow, I will laugh with you, maybe," and he sat down and tried to regain his composure and breath at the same time.

"You had better go back to the ship, and take something to brace you up," suggested Frank. "You are not used to such violent exercise, I guess."

"Well, no; I confess that I am not. I was never chased by a bear before, and hope I never will be again;" and he rose to his feet and accompanied the young inventor back to the ship, whilst Barney and Pomp proceeded to cut off the hams of the bear.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR MAKES A CONFESSION.

ON the way back to the ship, Frank picked up one of the large trout the professor had caught, and said:

"You were having splendid sport when Bruin came up?"

"Yes; never had such glorious sport in my life," returned the professor. "They bit as fast as I cast my hook."

"What did you do with the rod and tackle?"

The professor looked at Frank in a quizzical sort of way for a moment or two, and answered:

"I believe I had a big fish hung to it when you called to me to look out. I was so terrified at seeing the bear right there by me, and hearing him growl, that I think I dropped the pole and took to my heels. The fish may have it yet."

"I guess he has," laughed Frank; "but, no matter. We have plenty more. I have calculated for such accidents in a voyage of this kind."

"I am sorry I didn't catch him," remarked the professor, "as he was larger than the others."

"The largest fish always escape," said Frank, laughing. "When I was a boy, and went fishing, the biggest fish always got away somehow. If I 'hung' one and missed him, he always seemed twice as large as any I landed."

The professor laughed, and admitted that his boyish experience was very like his.

"Of course, and so is every man's who ever went fishing in his youth. However, coming back to present times, this fine trout will be all we want for supper in the way of fish. We will have some bear-steak, you know?"

"Yes; but I am not sure that I shall be able to eat any of it, after my experience with the beast."

"There's where you are wrong, professor."

"How so?"

"You should eat heartily of the bear-steak, in revenge for the scare he gave you."

"Revenge! I never cultivate a feeling of revenge against anything. It's foreign to my very nature."

"Well, then, go in on the Indian principle—that he who eats heartily of bear-meat will never again be afraid of one."

The man of science looked hard at the young inventor for a minute or two, and said:

"You are making game of me, my friend, because of my ignorance."

Frank burst out laughing again, and extending his hand to the professor, said:

"But I would never do so in the presence of third parties."

The professor grasped his hand and pressed it warmly.

"Don't forget one thing, though, professor—and that is, that what one man can do another can, or very near it. By keeping that idea in view, you will save yourself from appearing odd or timid under trying circumstances. Keep cool as long as you see others doing so. Let somebody else get scared first."

By this time they had reached the ship, where Pomp had built a fire and had water boiling ready for coffee or tea. Frank led the way into the ship, and went to the medicine-chest and took out a bottle of cordial, which he handed to the professor, saying:

"Take a swallow of this. It will do you good."

The man of science took the bottle, the advice and the medicine, and felt the good effects of it in a very few minutes. His respect for the young inventor was continuously on the increase, finding him equal to every emergency.

The supper that evening was one they all enjoyed. They had splendid appetites, and the way

the trout and bear-steaks disappeared would have created a panic in an ordinary boarding-house. The professor was prevailed on to try a piece of the bear-steak. He barely tasted it at first. Then he cut off a good "chunk" and chewed on it.

"It's good," he said.

"Then have a slice and your revenge at the same time," suggested Frank, placing a big slice on his plate.

Thus the man of science, for the first time in his life, partook of a meal of wild game in the wild woods of the West. The situation was a novel one to him, and he enjoyed it to the fullest extent of his capacity for such enjoyment.

The supper over, the party lit their pipes, and proceeded to enjoy a quiet smoke before retiring. For two hours the young inventor entertained the professor with stories of his adventures with his various inventions, and never did he have a more attentive listener. The man of science was interested in the new life he was leading, and it seemed as if he had entered a new world altogether.

When the hour for retiring came, Frank showed the professor the berth he was to occupy, and then placed Barney on guard for the first half of the night.

"Why keep guard?" the professor asked.

"This is not a hostile country."

"Why did you run from the bear?" asked Frank. "This is not a hostile country."

The professor laughed, and said:

"I give it up. You have the advantage of me."

"Well, I make it a rule to keep a guard on post whenever I am in a strange region, like this. It's a wise precaution, I think."

"Yes, indeed. I shall sleep better knowing the camp is guarded by a brave man," and he gave Barney a look that made the jolly, good-natured Irishman swell up almost to bursting.

Pomp glanced at Barney when the professor made the remark, and saw the effect of his words. A broad grin swept around his black face as he caught Barney's soldier-like posing, and whispered:

"Doan' bust your biler, Barney."

"Bogob!" returned Barney, "it's a naygur as kapes no biler," and he strutted off toward the lake to refill a bucket of water.

Nothing occurred during the night to disturb their slumbers, and they awoke with the birds the next morning, greatly refreshed. They also arose with appetites that were simply ravenous.

"What have you for breakfast, Pomp?" Frank asked.

"Trout an' b'ar steak, sah."

"Very good. Give us plenty of it, and we'll be satisfied—eh, professor?"

"Yes, more than satisfied. Why, where did you get those fine trout?"

"Outen de lake, sah," answered Pomp.

The professor glared at four large trout floundering in the grass near the camp, and seemed enchanted with them.

"Give me some bait!" he exclaimed, snatching up the rod, and preparing to try his hand at angling for trout again.

"De bait is in de box, sah," said Pomp, pointing to a small tin box, attached to the rod by a small cord.

The professor started off in a trot toward the lake, scarcely forty rods away from the camp-fire. He was full of a sportsman's enthusiasm over the certain prospect before him of bagging several fine trout before breakfast.

"Look out for bears, professor!" called out Frank, when the man of science was about half-way to the spot where he had fished the evening before.

"Ugh! Lord bless me!" ejaculated the professor, leaping aside, dropping the tackle, and preparing to run for dear life. But on looking around he beheld, instead of a huge black bear, Frank and the two servants laughing at him.

For a moment he was quite angry, and was on the point of making his anger known, when he was startled by hearing a growl in the edge of the timber on his left. A glance in that direction revealed to his astonished vision an enormous black bear, the mate, perhaps, of the one that had been killed the evening before.

His anger disappeared in a moment; fear took possession of him and lent wings to his feet. He dropped everything and made a break for the camp, leaping clear over the fire ere he stopped. "Crack!" went Frank's unerring rifle, and a bullet in his brain caused the brute to roll over in the throes of death.

"That settled him. Come here, professor, and let's go and have a look at him."

Professor Grimm marched boldly up to the bear, accompanied by Frank, and stood over him, a silent witness of his death-struggles.

"He is a big one," remarked Frank.

"Yes; and therefore a dangerous one to counter all alone."

"Oh, yes. He would have been an ugly tomer in a hugging match. Do you know anything about fire-arms, professor?"

"Oh, yes. I used to fish and hunt when was a youth."

"Well, you should go armed all the time when traveling. You don't know when or how you may be attacked."

"I was thinking of that. The truth is, I am not half as brave as I thought I was," and the professor looked sad as he made the confession.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROFESSOR OVERBOARD IN THE AIR.

BARNEY soon called them to breakfast, and they hastened to respond to the call, for they were hungry.

Pomp had prepared another savory meal of fish and bear-steak, and the best coffee in the world added to the attractions of the table. Both sat down and ate with ravenous appetites.

The meal over, they lost no time in preparing to leave.

Barney and Pomp quickly replaced everything, and when Frank called out "All aboard," they sprang in and took their usual seats.

The young inventor then set the machinery of the powerful electric batteries in motion. A moment or two later the rotascopes began to revolve. As they revolved they opened their wings to catch the breeze. Then the adjustable roof slid forward from off the cabin, and turned the rush of air from the boat below.

"Up she goes!" cried Pomp, as the ship rose from the earth and began to mount up in the air.

"Why, we are drifting right over the lake," cried the professor, in no little alarm.

He had quite forgotten himself.

"Yes," said Frank. "We shall be out over the ocean too, when we reach it. You are not afraid, are you?"

"Oh, no. If you can stand it, I am sure I can."

"Glad to hear you say that," said our hero, "for I can assure you that I think as much of my life as you do of yours."

"Yes, of course. I sometimes forget things I should remember."

"We all do that."

The morning was bright and clear. The sun was just gilding the tree-tops, when the air-ship soared above them. Its reflection on the leaves and grass caused the dew-drops to glitter and sparkle like millions of diamonds.

"What a beautiful sight!" ejaculated the professor, gazing in rapt admiration at the scene below.

"Beautiful indeed," remarked Frank. "No painter can equal that on canvas."

"No. Nature is the artist of all artists," said the professor.

The *Eagle* continued to mount higher and higher, and then started off in a northern direction, straight as the crow flies.

"We ought to see the great lakes some time to-day," remarked our hero, as he looked at the grand view ahead.

"I hope so. I am anxious to see them from this elevation. I know it must be a grand sight."

Frank and the professor were together, engaged in conversation, nearly all the forenoon. Pomp, who went on guard at midnight, and cooked breakfast at sunrise, fell asleep in his seat, and soon rolled in a heap on the bottom, or floor of the ship.

Barney could not resist the temptation to have a little fun at his expense.

There was a coil of rope lying near by the head of the sleeper. It was what is called a grass rope, very strong and durable.

One end of the rope was loose, or frayed, and looked somewhat like a brush.

Barney took up the end of the rope, and gently dragged it across the black face of the sleeper.

The effect was electrical.

Pomp struck a powerful blow at it, thinking some enormous bug had dropped down upon him. But he was only half awake, and in another moment he was fast asleep again—sounder than before.

Again Barney dragged the ragged end of the rope across his face, and the elaborate grin that illumined the face of the sleeping son of Ham caused a loud laugh to burst from his tormentor.

This was repeated several times, and the hearty laughter of the Irishman caused Frank to ask:

"You are having a fine time out there, Barney, are you not?"

"Bedad, sor, it's a worruld av fun," he answered, drawing the end of the rope across Pomp's face again.

His laughter caused the professor to leave

Frank and go to the rear of the cabin and look out at the two. He saw how it was, and a broad grin overspread his face as he caught sight of the contortions of Pomp's physiognomy.

He went out there and stood over the sleeper, laughing till he had to hold his sides, at the grimaces that swept from side to side of Pomp's face. He stepped on the coil of rope, and by and by his right foot worked through it to the floor, as he moved a little to give the sleeper room to squirm.

Barney drew the end of the rope back and forth over Pomp's face, for the delectation of the professor as well as himself, and the unconscious darkey squirmed as if wrestling with a first-class cramp colic.

At last it proved too much for the iron nerves of the sleeper. He gave a sudden start—kicked up both feet in the air with such force as to hoist the professor bodily over the side of the ship.

A wild yell burst from the professor as he went overboard, which was echoed by Barney in an Irish squawk that could have been heard miles away. A moment later a yell burst from Pomp.

"Ugh! Lef go dar, I tole yer!" cried Pomp, as he felt himself being drawn overboard by some unseen power.

All three yelled in unison, and Frank dashed outside the cabin to find the professor dangling in the air some twenty or thirty feet below, held by the rope which had become entangled around his leg, and Pomp entangled in the balance of the coil trying to keep from being drawn after him.

"My God!" he exclaimed, springing forward and clutching the rope in time to save both Pomp and the professor. "Help, here, Barney! Help, quick! Hold hard, Pomp! Keep your grip, professor!"

CHAPTER VII.

A NARROW ESCAPE AND ITS EFFECT.

The situation was an appalling one.

The air-ship was at least a half mile above the earth.

If the rope should slip and escape from Frank's hold, Professor Grimm would be dashed into eternity.

He had reached forth and caught the rope with both hands, whilst one leg was still entangled in the coils.

His face was ashen-hued; but his compressed lips and tenacious grip showed that he was going to battle for life to the last.

"Pomp! Barney!" cried Frank. "Help here! quick, for your lives!"

Pomp had partially recovered his wits, and grabbed the rope, without knowing just what was required of him, however.

Barney was a little more intelligent as to the real situation. He sprang forward and caught the rope with both hands.

"Bedad, it's meself as'll howld on ter it," he said.

"Steady, professor!" called out the young inventor. "We'll pull you up. Keep a good grip on the rope."

Then they began to pull on the rope, and, by degrees, pulled him up to the edge of the ship. He was almost exhausted.

"Catch him, Pomp," said Frank to the faithful black. "You are so much stronger than I."

"Yes, sah!"

Pomp caught him round the neck and under the arms, and lifted him into the ship by main strength.

"Dar yer is," said Pomp, letting go his hold the moment he felt that he had him safely on board.

To his infinite surprise the professor fell down at his feet in a death-like swoon, the effect of the terrible reaction of feeling.

"De Lor' bless my soul!" exclaimed Pomp. "Hope yer ain't done gone dead for suah!"

"Take him up and carry him in to his bed, Pomp. He has fainted," said Frank, the moment he saw what the trouble was.

Pomp took him up and bore him into the cabin, where he deposited him on the bed.

There was a look of trouble on Pomp's face. An undefined fear rested on his soul for which he could not account. Exactly what had happened he did not know. He had been suddenly awakened by being pulled overboard by the rope entangled around his legs, a thing he could not understand, try as hard as he may. That he had been in very great peril he well knew, and what puzzled him was lack of knowledge as to what caused it.

When he came out of the cabin, where he had left Frank in charge of the unconscious professor, he looked hard at Barney, and asked:

"What's you done gone an' done, Barney?"

Barney smiled a broad grin, and said:

"Faith, an' it's yesilf has done it, Pomp."

"Done what?"

"Throwed 'im overboard, begob."

Pomp's eyes stretched as big as saucers. He

glared at Barney as though he were the ghost of some old African king.

"Look heah, Barney," said he, shaking his woolly head, "what's dat yer givin' me, eh?"

"Sure, an' don't yez know the taste av it? It's the blessed truth ivery toime, ye black naygur."

Pomp was getting angry.

The mystery was getting deeper and deeper every moment. He was on the point of giving vent to his anger, when Frank called out to him to come inside a moment. He promptly responded, and in another minute was attending to some detail assigned him by the young inventor.

In the meantime, the professor was having a hard time of it. The terrible shock to his nerves proved more serious than was at first suspected. He remained quite a while in an unconscious state, despite Frank's efforts to revive him. When he did come to, he was not free from the idea that he was still dangling in the air, nearly a mile above the earth.

"You are all right now, professor," said Frank, in re-assuring tones, as soon as he thought he was in a condition to understand what was being said to him.

"Eh!" he answered, looking up at the young hero and then glaring wildly around the cabin. "Where am I? Ugh! Save me! Pull me up—quick!"

"You are all right now—all right, professor!"

Another glance around the cabin finally told him where he was. He looked hard at Frank for a minute or two, and said:

"My God! it was horrible!"

"Yes—a very narrow escape," was the reply; "but you are all right now, you see. We pulled you back on board again, and now you are all right."

The professor gave a shudder, and said:

"I am weakened so much that I don't believe I can stand on my feet."

"No doubt it was a terrible shock," returned Frank. "You must lie here and rest till you feel better. I will give you an opiate to make you sleep and quiet your nerves."

The young hero then prepared an opiate for him, and after he had taken it he was left alone to court the sleep he so much needed.

Outside the cabin, Frank took Barney aside and questioned him about the cause of the accident that came so near ending fatally for the man of science.

Barney frankly told him the whole story, and as he did so, the young inventor could not repress a smile as he caught the ludicrous phase of it.

He could not blame any one for what was purely an accident, and did not try to do so.

"It came very near ending both of them," he said.

"Faith, an' yez are roight," said the jolly Irishman. "The professor wint overboard like a cat. The saints bless the ould rope—sure, it was that same that saved him."

Frank caught all the points, and then had his little laugh over it, though the thought of the peril that had menaced the expedition made him tremble. He finally explained it to Pomp, who was amazed beyond expression at what he heard.

"De Lor' sabe us!" he exclaimed, glaring around at Barney. "Dat ar fool, Barney, is er gwine cause dis nigger ter git up in his sleep, some dark night, an' butt him libber ouden 'im, suah."

"Well, make sure you don't do it when you are awake," said Frank; "I won't have any quarreling on board, remember."

"Yes, sah. I ain't got nuffin agin 'im," and he shook his woolly head as though he would like to give the Irishman a taste of his butting powers.

"Remember what I say, Barney," said Frank, pointing his finger warningly at Barney; "if you and Pomp get to quarreling on board this ship, I'll put you off, if I have to leave you on an iceberg."

"Bedad, thin," said Barney, laughing good-naturedly, "I'll love the naygur wid all me sowl."

"See that you do, and dwell together in unity to the end of the trip."

"Unity—unity—unity," muttered Barney to himself, as Frank walked back into the cabin. "Sure an' it's meself as is puzzled to know phat it is, at all, at all."

"Oh, course yer don't know," said Pomp, with just a slight tinge of contempt in his tone and manner. "Dat means yer mus' behave yerself, it does," and he looked as wise as a serpent as he delivered the definition.

"Begob, thin, av yer don't moind it yersilf it's overboard yez'll go some foine noight—in yer slape. Faith, an' I'm thinkin' yer will, av Mr. Frank don't tie yer down to the floor."

"Go away wid yer nonsense, Barney. Ef yer

doan' mind yer business when I'm er-snoozin', yer'll git kicked overboard yerself, suah."

"Bedad, it's a loively naygur yer are whin yer slape," replied Barney, laughing in spite of himself as he thought of Pomp's grimaces and contortions whenever he drew the ragged end of the rope across his face. The way he lifted the unsuspecting professor with his feet almost threw him into convulsions.

Barney's laugh finally became contagious, and the first thing Pomp knew he was laughing with him, and enjoying the thing equally as much.

The day passed, and the professor slept through the greater part of it. The strong opiate Frank had given him had a wonderfully good effect on him. He came to about sunset, and then got up and sat out on deck, where he could get the fresh breeze.

He was pale and weak, but otherwise all right.

"How do you feel now?" our hero asked.

"Very well, thank you," but there was no smile on his face. The shock was too great for him to feel much like laughing yet awhile.

"You'll be all right by morning," said Frank. "Take a light supper and a smoke, and then you'll feel much better."

He was feeling hungry then, for he had eaten no dinner that day. The savory odor that came from the kitchen, where Pomp was preparing supper, whetted his appetite to a keen edge. When supper was announced he was prompt to respond, and from the way he ate, Frank was satisfied that he was all right.

As it was clear and still, Frank concluded to push on and travel all night if he could, and thus gain one day's distance in the trip. The professor made no objection, and so the air-ship continued on the way as the stars came out.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE SHORE OF LAKE SUPERIOR.

When the dews of the summer night began to dampen their clothing, Barney was placed at the engineer's seat, with instructions to keep her going in a due north course.

"Don't bother with anything else," cautioned Frank. "All you have to do is too keep her on her course. The batteries will do their work and keep her going. At midnight, call me up, and I will see how things are."

"Faith, an' I will," said Barney, and then they all retired to sleep.

At midnight Frank arose and saw that everything was going on smoothly, and then set Pomp to relieve Barney, who retired to his berth to sleep.

When daylight came they were over the western end of Lake Superior. Away on the right, far beyond the range of vision, the great inland sea extended. By means of a powerful glass they could see vessels of every description going in different directions.

"We can't stop anywhere for breakfast this morning," remarked Frank, as he handed the glass to Professor Grimm. "There's no place, and I don't care to settle down in the water."

"I guess you are right, though I don't know much about it," said the professor. "I would like to get down on solid ground once more."

"Oh, you want to walk back home, do you?"

"No, sir," replied Grimm, with no little dignity. "I am going with you as far as you go, and see the thing through. I am not in the habit of backing out of anything I embark in."

"I beg your pardon, professor; I really didn't mean to offend you."

"Oh, I am aware of that, and am not offended. I don't think you would intentionally do anything to offend me."

"I am glad you have got that down fine," said Frank, "for I would as soon think of wrecking the ship as intentionally offending you."

"I believe you," and the professor extended him his hand, which Frank grasped and warmly shook.

Late in the afternoon they came in sight of the northern shore of the great lake, where a splendid white beach stretched back some distance to a deep forest.

Frank instantly made up his mind to settle down there and camp until the next morning. He wanted to stop as often as possible, so as to kill game for present use, and thus save his store of provisions for the Arctic regions. So he steered the course of the ship to that point, and in less than a half hour they were settled down within fifty yards of the water of the greatest lake in the world.

Professor Grimm sprang out and strutted about like one who did really love old mother earth.

"Ah! it makes me feel good to be on solid ground again," he exclaimed.

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp, as he stepped out after him.

The professor wheeled on the darkey, and said: "Yes—you were really glad to kick me out yes—"

terday, just to see me drop down about a mile on the solid earth."

"Fore de Lor', marsa, I didn't mean for ter go ter do it."

"Of course not; but a nigger that kicks like that in his sleep is more dangerous asleep than awake."

"Dat dar Barney done gone an' done it, sah," said Pomp. "I sleep jes' like de cat, ef dey doan' bodder me, I does."

"And kick worse than a wild mule if they do bother you, eh?"

"I speck I does, sah," and he grinned from ear to ear as he made the admission.

"Well, I shall try to keep away from you in your sleep hereafter," the professor remarked.

"Yes, sah; an' dat fool Barney better do dat way, too, I reckon;" and he shook his head in a way that plainly told he bore a grudge against the Irishman for what he had done.

Frank was too busy attending to righting the ship at the moment to pay any attention to what was being said around him. He stepped out on the white sand, and said to Pomp:

"You may prepare to camp here till to-morrow."

"Yes, sah;" and the faithful fellow prepared to make a fire and arrange things for comfort and convenience. Frank took a gun, and the professor the fishing-tackle, and both started out to wander along the shore of the lake in quest of sport.

"This ought to be a fine game region," said Frank, looking around at the woods on the left and the vast sea of fresh water on his right.

"Yes. It's the most quiet region I ever beheld," returned the professor.

Just then they were both startled by a sudden rush of some animal in the thick forest just on their left. Something dashed away from the edge of the timber with great rapidity, as if greatly alarmed.

"What was that?" the professor asked, somewhat alarmed.

"I don't know," replied Frank, "but think it was a deer. They generally dash through the woods that way when alarmed."

"You are sure it was not a bear?"

"Yes, quite sure," and the young inventor could not repress a smile at the fears that were uppermost in the professor's mind. "A bear never makes that kind of noise. It was a deer, and I would like to get a shot at him. A bit of fresh venison would taste good at supper."

"So would fish," remarked the man of science. "I'll try my luck out there," and he proceeded to arrange his tackle, whilst Frank made his way toward the woods in quest of other game.

The professor was soon absorbed in catching fish, which he found very plentiful along the shore of the lake. Frank made his way into the woods, and in a very few minutes had brought down a fat buck.

Barney and Pomp soon procured the deer-horns, and, as they were returning to the camp, discovered that the professor had caught fish enough to feed a dozen hungry men.

"You've got more fish than we can eat, professor," suggested Frank, as he saw the fine specimens floundering on the sand.

"That may be," was the reply, "but yet I haven't caught half enough."

"The deuce!"

"No, sir. I am so fond of the sport that nothing less than a thousand would satisfy me."

"Good! You are a true sportsman. Go in and catch a thousand."

The professor was in his glory.

Pomp picked up two large trout and went on back to camp, and the professor was left alone with his occupation. An hour later, when the fisherman was summoned to supper, he was so deeply absorbed in the sport that he didn't hear them. When he was called the third or fourth time, he actually debated in his mind whether it would not pay better to miss the meal and continue the catch. But appetite triumphed, and he returned, leaving a score of fine fish floundering about on the sand.

"Splendid sport," he said, as he washed his hands. "Never had such luck in my life. Would like to stop here a week and fish every day."

"That would hardly do, you know."

"Of course it wouldn't. I would vote against it."

"Supper, sah," said Pomp, and they sat down to the savory repast.

CHAPTER IX.

THE EAGLES ATTACK THE SHIP.

AFTER spending another quiet night, the little party were up with the lark the next morning. Pomp prepared another breakfast of game that was fit for a king. The professor declared he never had such an appetite in all his life.

"If our provisions get scarce when we reach the Arctic regions," he said to Frank, "I am afraid my appetite will be our ruin."

"Oh, we can easily shoot white bears up there," said Frank.

"Yes, if we should see any, but you know that in that frozen world everything goes wrong with man."

"So it seems; but we have two months' provisions on board, even if we get nothing else. In that time we could go round the North Pole and back. But see here, Pomp."

"Yes, sah."

"We don't want to begin on our regular stores till we pass over the region of game, so you must take along a supply of meat and fish as far as they will keep."

"Yes, sah," and he prepared the venison so as to keep several days' supply on hand, whilst of fish he put up enough for the day.

The meal over with, they prepared to resume their journey northward, and in a little while they were soaring upward again.

They went up nearly one mile, and thus obtained a vast panoramic view of the country. Several miles on their right they found a small town on the shore of the lake. Away off in the distance, through spy-glasses, they saw two more.

Then a few schooners were seen on the waters as the sun lifted the mist.

"The further north we go now," said Frank, "the more wild and unsettled the country. Before night we will see nothing but Indian villages, and very few of them. There are some splendid lakes and streams up there, however, that are full of fish, and the woods teem with game of every description."

"But the Indians—are they peaceable?" the professor asked.

"Oh, yes. The Canadian authorities never have any trouble with their Indians. They treat them too kindly for that."

"Which is the best way after all," remarked the professor. "I don't think we would have any trouble with them, either, if our people did not bother them."

"I quite agree with you," said Frank, "though our red-skins seem to be innately bad. I don't think I ever saw but one really good Indian in my life."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, and he was dead."

The professor glared at our hero for a moment, as if he had failed to catch his meaning. But the smile that lurked round the corners of the young inventor's mouth at last explained his words, and he simply said:

"Ah! I understand."

"They are a hard crowd, generally," said the young hero, "and they will never settle down to ways of civilized people but in one direction."

"What is that, pray?"

"When they are planted six feet underground, like Christian people, they generally stay there."

"Oh, I see you have no love for the poor Indian," remarked the professor.

"Well, not much. I've been among them a good deal, and have had to fight them for my life when a state of profound peace existed. Give 'em a chance to lift your hair and plunder you without the government finding it out, and they'll do it every time."

"We will have to be on our guard with these Canadian Indians, then."

"Only against their stealing. They are a very peaceable set, but will steal anything they can lay their hands on."

"Then we'll have to watch everything about the ship."

"Yes, for they'll take the ship if they can. There isn't much fight among them."

Frank was on the lookout for places of interest. He had a map spread out before him to enable him to locate each river or lake that came in sight. Many a small lake, covering a few acres up to hundreds, had no place on the map.

"The map-makers couldn't find all of them, of course," said Frank. "They didn't have a bird's-eye view of the country, like we have now."

"No—how could they? What a region for fish and game! Ah! there's an Indian village down there, near that little lake."

"Yes—that's Indian. See! They all run out and stare up at us! They don't know what to make of us up here. They will have something to talk about in their huts for years to come, and maybe they will never understand it."

"They don't take the papers," said the professor, "and can never find out. Yet they may be happier than we think."

"Yes. They live along, and have but few wants. Their hard winters, though, must make life a burden sometimes. The snow is sometimes ten feet deep up here in this country."

The air-ship sped along through the air at a

splendid rate. A good breeze was almost blowing them, which helped them along at least fifteen miles an hour, which, coupled with their own speed, made nearly forty miles.

Vast tracts of forest, then open prairie, rivers and lakes, passed in review, like a moving panorama, an ever-changing scene, that kept all four deeply interested spectators.

"Look dar, Marse Frank!" yelled Pomp, with a suddenness that startled every one on board. They looked up and found that several enormous eagles were making circles above and around the air-ship, as if to inspect the new invader of their hitherto undisputed domain.

"Eagles!" exclaimed Frank, the moment he beheld them.

"Yes, genuine eagles," said the professor. "How I wish we could get one of them alive."

"Alive! I'd about as soon have a tiger around as one of those untamed eagles. Their claws are as dangerous, and their beaks but little less so." Just then they made the air thrill with their shrill screams.

"Get me my gun, Barney," said Frank. "They may see fit to attack us, and we had better be prepared for them."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Professor Grimm, "you don't mean to say that they would have the temerity to attack us, do you?"

"Yes, I've been attacked by eagles up in the air about the Rocky Mountains, and had to fight hard to keep them off. You see they are kings of the air, and don't like to see anything sailing around in defiance of them. Look out, there!"

An enormous eagle gave a shrill, defiant scream, and darted down on one of the rotascopes that was making at least 700 revolutions per minute. It was revolving so fast that it appeared almost like a solid stationary substance. The eagle may have thought it was. But he was soon undeceived. The moment he struck it with his talons, it sent him whirling into space so suddenly that he was wild with fright.

His screams caused the others to cluster around him and help him in his shrill cries.

"Begob, but it's a foine concert," said Barney.

"Dat's er fac'," assented Pomp. "Dey ain't no good singers neider."

"They are going to try it again," said Frank, as he saw them circling around the ship. "I'll give one of them a load of shot and see how he likes it."

The eagles screamed defiance, and made several swoops in the direction of the ship, as if bent on attack. But it seemed to be rather too much for them.

One would make a straight dive as if intending to go through, but when within a few feet of it he would shoot up and over it like an arrow.

"I'll get that big fellow if he tries that game again," remarked Frank, as he stood up, gun in hand, and watched the movements of one of the largest of the king-birds, which appeared to be fiercer and bolder than all the rest.

Suddenly the great eagle made a dash at the ship. Pomp and the others stood up to watch the result. On he came like a screaming thunder-bolt. Frank quickly raised his rifle and fired.

A loud scream escaped the eagle. The ball missed its mark, but the smoke of the discharge in his face disconcerted the daring bird, and in another instant he was right on top of Pomp.

"Ah! de Lor' gorrarnighty!" exclaimed the darkey, staggering back and trying to escape the eagle's claws.

In the confusion he grasped both legs with his hands, and held on with a deathless tenacity. By a singular mishap he lost his balance, and in trying to right himself without releasing his hold, was jerked overboard by the eagle. In another instant both went shrieking through the air toward mother earth.

CHAPTER X.

A PERILOUS DESCENT—NEARING THE FROZEN REGIONS OF THE NORTH POLE.

THE suddenness of the disaster fairly took Frank's breath away. He was appalled.

The professor groaned.

Barney yelled.

But the young inventor was so convulsed with horror that he stood like one in a trance.

The gun fell from his hands, and he glared at the fast disappearing man and eagle, whose shrieks and screams came back to him like accusing voices from the other side of the grave.

At last he found his voice.

"My God!" he groaned. "The poor fellow is killed!"

"Oh, wirra, wirra, wirra!" moaned Barney. "Bad 'cess to the day. God rest his soul!"

The professor was overcome with horror and sat down, his face as white as a sheet.

Frank leaned over and looked down toward the earth.

He could see the great eagle with outstretched

wings, struggling desperately to free himself, and also hear his screams. But he was going down through the air at a terrific rate. Pomp was evidently holding on to his feet with a deathless grip.

"Poor fellow!" groaned Frank, his eyes filling with tears. "It's an awful death to die! God help him."

Down, down went both Pomp and the eagle. Filled with unspeakable horror at his doom, the poor fellow held on to the eagle. Just why he did so he himself didn't know. It may have been that to hold to anything then was a precious boon. Drowning men will grasp at a straw, and a man whirling through space would be apt to do the same thing.

Be that as it may, he held on, and at times the tremendous efforts of the eagle to free himself almost checked the downward speed of both. The immense wings of the bird had great lifting power, and he could doubtless have flown away with a sheep; but Pomp's weight was too much for him. Nearer and nearer the earth they came, and Pomp looked down to see which particular spot he would reach in a shapeless mass of flesh and broken bones.

Just before they struck the earth the eagle made a supreme effort, and flapped his great wings as he never did before. The effort checked the force of the fall to such a degree that when Pomp struck the ground he merely fell and rolled over, as though he had simply made a leap and stumbled.

But he released his hold on the eagle, which uttered a shrill scream and soared upward again.

Pomp was upon his feet again in a moment, full of joy, as well as of amazement, over his escape.

"Glory to God!" he shouted, and then he began to dance a regular breakdown, and to fling his arms about like one wild with joy.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Frank, up in the ship. "The poor fellow is not killed! The eagle must have broken his fall! Barney! professor! Look at him! and he sprang to the engineer's seat, and reversed the electric machinery. The ship at once veered round and began to settle down.

In ten minutes the ship settled down, and Frank sprang out and caught Pomp in his arms.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "I thought you were gone for good, Pomp!"

"Yes, sah! I did too, but de eagle helt me up. Hi, Barney, yer Irisher! Yer can't do dat, eh?"

"Be the powers, yer wouldn't do it yerself again, I'm thinking," responded Barney, as he wrung the black's hand.

"Dat's er fac'," grinned Pomp. "It's drefful bad, it is, suah."

The professor congratulated him in the heartiest manner, and then they settled down to let their nerves recover from the terrible strain they had been subjected to. After an hour's rest they resumed the journey, and nothing more of interest occurred for some time. Ten days passed; they were a long way on their trip.

The air was much colder than they had ever experienced at that season of the year, and all of them had to put on heavier clothing to guard against any ill effects of the cold.

"What sheet of water is that out there on our right?" Professor Grimm asked, after having gazed silently in that direction for several minutes.

"I guess it's Hudson's Bay," replied Frank, "as that is the only very large sheet of water on the map hereabouts."

"Surely we are not so far north as that!" exclaimed the professor, in no little surprise.

"I guess we are," said Frank. "We have been out some ten days, you know."

"Yes—and we must have come nearly 3,000 miles in that time. Get your quadrant and let's take our bearing, Mr. Reade. We ought to make sure of our position."

"Yes—we are in a good position to take it, too," and our hero hastened to get his instrument and make calculations. As he called out the numbers the professor put them down, and then they proceeded to make out the total.

An exclamation of surprise burst from the professor.

"Why, we are up to the 62d degree of latitude!" he exclaimed. "We have been traveling along the west shore of Hudson's Bay all night long."

"That's so," assented Frank, "and that puts us in three or four degrees of the Arctic Circle."

"Yes. I don't wonder at it's being cold."

"What's dat Arktick Curcul, Marse Frank?" Pomp asked.

Frank looked at the professor, and then at the sable questioner.

"You had better answer that question, professor," he remarked.

Of course. That was in the professor's line, and he was glad to get hold of some one to whom he could expound his theories. He began, and gave the son of Ham a learned disquisition on the divisions of the earth, and the theory of latitude and longitude.

Pomp listened with a puzzled expression on his black face that plainly indicated that what the professor was saying was all Greek to him. Frank could not repress a smile, and finally said:

"Professor, you have got him out over his depth. Pomp is more mystified than ever, and doesn't understand a word you are saying."

"Eh? What? Bless my soul, is that so?"

"Yes, sah," promptly answered Pomp. "Dat's all Dutch ter me, suah."

Frank burst into a hearty laugh. "Excuse me," said the professor, coloring up to the roots of his hair; "I have had no experience in teaching his tribe."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Frank, as the professor walked back into the cabin. "Give it up, do you?"

"Yes," was the curt reply.

"Well, now, just see me open his mind for him. I say, Pomp."

"Sah?"

"The Arctic Circle is the line that goes around the earth several hundred miles from the top, inside of which everything freezes up in cold weather."

The professor guffawed at this rather reckless description, but did not gainsay it. Pomp well understood that the frozen region was close by, and that was all that was wanted.

When night came on they concluded to settle down near the shore of the great bay, and make a camp there. Accordingly, they looked about for an open space where they could make a descent. Such a place was found, and the descent was made.

"Now, be careful," said Frank, "and carry your weapons with you all the time. You don't know when you may be attacked by some wild beast."

"Have you ever been here before?" Professor Grimm asked.

"No," said Frank, "and that's the reason why I don't want to take any chances. When I don't know anything about a place I make it a rule to be prepared for the worst; then I know I am all right."

"Yes—yes—that's sensible," and the man of science took down a rifle with him when he stepped out of the ship.

Barney and Pomp were both armed with big seven-shooters—revolvers that were as deadly as rifles, at short range. Besides the revolvers they carried long hunting-knives. Frank simply carried a rifle, as he intended to hunt around a bit in quest of game of some kind.

Leaving Barney and Pomp to build the fire and get the camp in shape, Frank and the professor strolled off along the shore of the bay, looking about for game. They had not gone very far ere they saw bear-tracks.

"Ah! look there," said our hero.

"What are they?"

"Bear-tracks. This region is full of bears and wolves."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. The Hudson Bay Company get all their furs from this region, you know."

"So! I forgot that. We must be on our guard."

"Oh, they are not dangerous at this season of the year. Come, let's follow this trail and see if we can't get the bear," and he led the way toward the forest, followed by the professor.

CHAPTER XI.

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.

THEY did not have to go very far in the woods ere they were met by a fierce growl from a bear—the very one they were following. They had come upon him much sooner than they expected.

"Look out!" cried Frank. "Here he is!" and he prepared to be ready if the beast should attack them.

The professor sprang behind Frank, so much terrified that our hero was afraid that he might do some very wild shooting.

"Don't get behind me!" he called out to him. "Get on my right or left, and keep your eye on the brutes."

The demoralized professor did not see proper to adopt his suggestion, and Frank turned on him and said:

"Give me that gun if you won't get from behind me."

"Why should I?"

"Because I won't have a nervous man behind

me with a loaded gun. You might shoot me instead of the bear."

"No danger of that."

"Then I will return to the ship," and he turned and started to retrace his steps, thus leaving the professor in the rear, toward the bear.

Just at that moment a huge black bear, seeing them retreat, made a charge, uttering a fierce growl at the time. That was more than the professor could stand. He broke away and ran for dear life toward the ship, where Pomp and Barney were engaged in building a fire.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed our hero, "he can't help it. His nerves ran away with him. I'll meet the enemy now."

He turned and waited for the bear, knowing that the beast would stop and stand up on his hind feet ere attacking him. The bear did not disappoint him. As he rose on his hind feet the young inventor took a good aim at his head and fired. The unerring rifle made no mistake. The bullet went crashing through the brain of the huge brute, and he rolled over in the agonies of death.

Just a half minute later another bear, maddened by the smell of blood, rushed out of another thicket and charged on the young hero. But the rifle was a Winchester repeater, and so he stood his ground.

Crack!

The bear received the bullet in his shoulder, which disabled his right fore arm.

With an angry growl, the fierce brute rose on his hind feet, and strode toward the brave young hero. That was just the position Frank wanted to get him in, and he lost no time in availing himself of the situation.

Crack!

The second bear rolled over near the first one, tearing up the earth and bushes with his terrible claws. But he finally settled down in the stillness of death, and then Frank started to return to the camp to send Barney and Pomp back for the hams.

"We will need some fresh meat every day," he said, "and those four hams will do lots of good. I am glad I found them."

He had scarcely reached the edge of the clearing ere he heard growls and snarls that didn't sound like bears. Then a short, sharp yelp told him that the wolves were devouring the dead bears.

"By the great whale!" he exclaimed, "they shall not have it! I've got fourteen more loads, in this rifle, and I'll give 'em every charge."

He turned back, and found five or six big wolves tearing one of the dead bears to pieces.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

With each shot a wolf toppled over; but others took their places and howled and yelped, maddened by the smell of blood.

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

Eight shots, and a wolf killed every time!

It was getting hot. More wolves were coming every moment. They were now rending the wounded ones. The blood was making them frantic.

Barney and Pomp heard the shots that were fired in rapid succession. They also heard the wolves, and knew that a pack of them were about—probably attacking the young inventor. They listened a moment, and then darted on board the ship, whence they emerged a moment later, each armed with a repeating-rifle.

"Come, Pomp!" called Barney.

"Hyer I is," said Pomp, dashing forward.

In another moment Professor Grimm found himself alone in the ship. Barney and Pomp had not said a word to him, and he did not know what to do.

He had the repeating-rifle still in his possession, and he was debating in his mind whether he had better remain or follow after Barney and Pomp.

He was about to join them, when he saw four huge wolves running toward the ship sniffing the air, as though something on board had attracted them.

"Ah! they are coming after me. I shall give them a hard fight," and he raised his rifle and fired.

The bullet went true, and one of the rascals went down with a yelp.

The others immediately sprang upon and proceeded to devour him. Amazed at the scene, the professor stood there on the deck of the ship, and gazed at the sickening orgie.

By and by, when there was no more wolf to eat, they began snuffing at the ship again.

Crack! went another shot, and another one was wounded.

The same revolting scene was repeated, and the number of wolves kept increasing. In the greatest alarm the professor continued to fire, and, strange to say, he brought down a wolf at every shot.

At last, as Barney, Pomp and the young inventor appeared, after having dispersed the brutes out in the woods, the few remaining ones in front of the ship took to their heels.

"Hurrah for the professor!" cried Frank, anxious to encourage the man of science in the exercise of physical courage.

Barney and Pomp took it up, and made the welkin ring with cheers.

"You did splendidly, professor," said Frank, as he came up and shook him by the hand. "I did think you an arrant coward when you ran off and left me just now."

"I beg your pardon a thousand times," he replied. "A wild bear loose in the woods was too much for me. I was ashamed of myself even before I reached the ship, and was on the point of going back when the wolves made their appearance. I suppose one must have some little experience in such things before the situation loses some of its terrors."

"Oh, yes. You have made a good beginning to-day. When you have learned the use of weapons, and got the confidence they naturally inspire, you will be all right. Let me see. You must have killed a dozen, at least."

"Yes, I think I did."

"That was doing very well. Pomp, you and Barney had better go back and secure those hams. We will have some bear-steaks for supper."

"Yes, sah," and both the faithful fellows recharged their Winchesters and went back after the bear-hams in the edge of the woods.

The wolves had been slaughtered with merciless rapidity. Over fifty of them lay dead and dying about the place, and our young hero well knew that the scent of blood would keep a few howling around the camp all night.

"When they return," he said, meaning Barney and Pomp, "we will move a few miles further up the coast, as the wolves will be howling all night about here."

"I am glad of that," remarked the professor, "as I don't think I could sleep a wink if I heard them."

Barney and Pomp soon returned, and then they prepared to leave the place forthwith.

CHAPTER XII.

IN A SNOW-STORM—THE ICEBERG.

THOUGH Pomp had built up a splendid camp-fire, they were under the necessity of leaving it. There were too many dead brutes around to make a longer stay in that place anything like a comfortable one. In a few minutes they were all in the ship and rising up in the air.

The sun was not quite down behind the horizon, and they were thus enabled to look well for another open place where they could encamp for the night.

That place was soon found about seven miles further up the coast, where they settled down near the shore of the great bay.

"I think we can rest in peace here," said Frank, as he stepped out on to the white sand of the beach.

"I don't see any wild beasts about," remarked the professor, looking cautiously around toward the woods.

"There are none here, I guess," Frank said. "Build up a fire as soon as you can, Pomp."

"Yes, sah," and the brave old darkey lost no time in gathering the wherewith to make the fire.

Barney aided him, and in a little while a roaring fire was booming where a fire was, perhaps, never before kindled.

That night they feasted on bear-steaks and fish, and ate to their heart's content. No signs of any wild beast disturbed them, and when they retired to their berths, Barney remained on post armed with rifle, knife and revolver.

The night passed, however, without any disturbance, and they ate an early breakfast in order to make an early start.

"We will cross the Arctic Circle to-day," remarked Frank.

"Yes, and every day after this will be colder than the one before it, too," said the professor.

"Of course, for we are getting further and further away from the sun."

"Pomp."

"Sah?"

"Cook up as much as you can of that ham. We may need it before we get any more."

"Yes, sah," and the faithful fellow went to work to do as he was told.

In cooking the breakfast that morning Pomp put up enough cooked bear-steaks to last the party at least three days, and then packed the others away for future use.

"How much does all that weigh, Pomp?" our hero asked of the cook.

"I dunno, sah."

"Well, weigh it and let me know."

Pomp weighed it and reported:

"One hundred and sixteen pounds, sah."

"Very well. Keep a record of every pound, so we may know just how much extra lifting power we have on hand."

"Yes, sah."

He put it on the record, and then, everything being in readiness, he set the rotascopes in motion, and in another minute they were rising in the air.

The morning was bright and clear, and on the right they could see the great bay stretching away beyond the range of vision, and on the left the illimitable wilderness spread out toward the west, as if to cover the earth to the setting sun.

It was a grand solitude that lay beneath them. No town or city could they see. On the bosom of the great deep they saw no ships or other sail.

"It's a dreary-looking country," the professor remarked.

"It is, indeed, and I guess it's more so further north. The whole region is not worth the life of one good man. Yet hundreds have been sacrificed in trying to find out the mystery of the open Polar Sea."

"Yes, but the human mind will never rest satisfied till that mystery is cleared up," added the professor, "and, unless we succeed in this expedition, hundreds of more lives will be sacrificed."

"Oh, yes," assented Frank, "because the 'pool killer' is locked up, you know."

Professor Grimm laughed, and the conversation turned to other subjects.

The day passed, and night came on. Below was a sheet of water which did not look very inviting as a resting-place, so they kept on, and sailed all night long. The air was cold—very cold—and they had to put on heavier clothing toward midnight.

When morning came again they were still sailing over water, and the leaden sky overhead threatened to send snow or something worse, on everything below.

"I wonder where we are now," the professor said, looking down toward the expanse of water below.

"That's more than I can say," said our hero. "We can't take observations till the sun comes out."

"That's so. I guess it won't come out to-day."

"No. It's going to snow. I see a few flakes flying now."

Pomp and Barney gave a shudder as they saw small particles of snow flying. By and by they began to fall faster, and in another hour the ship was cutting her way through a furious, blinding snow-storm.

Frank had to steer by the compass, and he kept her headed toward the north with a steady hand.

The snow fell so fast and thick that the earth below was completely hidden from view. It was simply white—everything was white—and cold.

"Dis heah is mighty col' work, Barney," said Pomp, as he stood shivering at his post.

"Bedad, an' yez can say that same every toime," replied Barney. "An' sure, it's cowlder it'll be afore it gits warmer."

"Dat's er fac' and Pomp turned gloomily away to attend to his duties.

The day passed, and as the snow continued flying the ship could not settle down anywhere. In fact, they could not see any place to settle down in. They were, therefore, forced to keep upon the wing through another long night. Oh, how cold it was!

Before morning came the snow ceased flying, and the stars came out. But it was, if possible, colder than ever.

Just as the sun was clearing away the shadows of night, the young inventor looked down and discovered the dark-bluish water but a few hundred feet below. Right in front of him, scarcely a half mile away, was an enormous iceberg—a veritable mountain of ice—against which the ship would dash in two minutes if not turned from its course.

He dashed into the cabin, and set the rotascopes revolving at a double rate of speed, and the ship began to rise.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE EFFECT OF FRIGHT ON THE PROFESSOR.

THE presence of the enormous iceberg just in their front, with a solid, menacing look that

threatened instant destruction to the ship, caused a thrill to run through all on board. Professor Grimm held his breath, and Pomp and Barney gazed in horror at the iceberg.

But the daring young inventor held steadily to the silver crank that controlled the battery, that moved the rotascopes, and mentally calculated the time and distance. It was short, quick work, and the danger was so great that the bottom of the boat knocked a quantity of snow off the top of the iceberg.

Every one on board felt the jar, but as the gallant ship soared on higher and higher, they drew a long breath of relief, and knew that the danger was past.

"Golly, Barney!" exclaimed Pomp, "dat was er close call, suah," and he shivered as if his teeth were about to be rattled out of his head.

"Bedad, an' so it was," replied Barney. "Phat does it mane, anyhow?"

"What?"

"That ould oiceberg up hyer so hoigh?"

"Dat iceberg didn't come up heah, Barney. De ship went down dar whar it was."

Barney looked overboard, and saw nothing but a white field of fine snow. The water and icebergs could not be seen, of course.

"Phat does a naygur know?" he said, looking contemptuously at Pomp. "Sure, an' aren't we a moile above the wather?"

Pomp giggled.

"Barney," he said, "ye ain't ripe yet. Ax Marse Frank, an' he tole yer dat we was down dere close by de water, suah. We am high up now. Doan' yer go for ter git skeered now, 'cause I ain't gwine ter hol' yer if yer does."

"By the piper that played afore Moses!" hissed Barney, as he saw that Pomp was making fun of him, "av yez grin ag'in, I'll jump down yer throat!"

Pomp grinned from ear to ear, and shook his head, saying:

"Dis chile kick white man overboard mid his foot. Ef I butt youse one time, Barney, whar yer be, eh?"

Barney had had experience enough with Pomp's head to keep away from it. He turned away, and hugged his Arctic overcoat closer to his body.

Professor Grimm was almost sick from the reaction of emotions. He had faced a peril that threatened instant destruction to all on board. The danger called up all the terrors that come to one in the presence of death. The escape was as sudden as the peril was, and the rapid reaction of feeling almost prostrated him. He turned pallid in the face, and staggered to a seat.

Frank knew what ailed him at a glance, and sprang forward and caught him by the arm.

"I say, professor," he exclaimed, "let's have a drink on that! It was neatly done, wasn't it?"

"Yes," gasped the man of science, as he sank down on the seat.

He was too weak to stand up. Frank had him a half a glass of brandy in a moment.

"Here, drink this. It'll drive out the cold."

The professor swallowed it at a gulp, and the effect was all that Frank could have wished. It was good strong brandy, and its very strength was what did the work.

The professor revived in a minute or two, and remarked:

"It was a narrow—very narrow escape, Mr. Reade."

"Yes; but nobody was hurt, you see," said Frank.

"I am not sure of that," was the reply. "I think I was scared out of a year's growth, at least."

"Oh, I guess you have had all the growth you'll ever have, professor," said our hero, laughing. "You see, you are not used to these things, like the rest of us."

"Are you used to them?" he asked, with child-like innocence.

"Well, rather. We meet with narrow escapes very often on every expedition we go on."

"Well, I didn't know that. I hope we won't have any more like that."

"Why, they are exhilarating. We wouldn't have any fun if we didn't have something of the kind once in a while."

"Deliver me from all such fun!" said the professor, with a dismal shake of the head.

"Oh, you are not young, as I am!" and Frank laughed again, and went out to see how things looked.

Even then the professor could not shake off the tremor of the terrible fear that had swept over him. He went to his berth and lay down. He felt weak and demoralized, and had no appetite for his dinner.

Frank could not help smiling, as he thought of the pallor on the professor's face just as the ship skimmed over the top of the iceberg. He did not wish to hurt his feelings, or he would have

laughed loud and long. But he had too much respect for the man of science to do that.

But when he went out to see Pomp and Barney he found them both very quiet, and doing their best to keep warm.

"Did you see the iceberg, Barney?" he asked.

"Yis, sor, bad cess to it," was the prompt reply.

"Big chunk of ice, eh?"

"Yis, sor, it wur."

"Ever see one like it before?"

"Bedad, an' I have."

Frank was staggered.

"Where?" he asked.

"In ould Ireland, bedad."

"Oh, I forgot. I have read that they use larger ones than that in Ireland to keep liars cool on."

"Sure, an' that's where it all went to, begob. I niver got any oice for me whisky all the toime I wur in Ireland; the dorthy spalpeens av loiers used it all up."

"Barney, give me your hand," said Frank, extending his hand toward the jolly Irishman. "I respect an honest man wherever I see him."

"Bedad, an' I'm that same," said Barney, giving the young inventor a hearty shake of the hand.

Frank turned to Pomp, and asked him what he thought of icebergs.

"Dey ain't half ez big as some liars dat I knows, Marse Frank," said the old darkey.

"Eh! Did you ever see a liar as big as that iceberg, Pomp?" the young inventor asked.

"De Lor' bless yer heart, honey," said Pomp, grinning. "Dat ain't nuffin' longside dat Irisher. Ef youse see anuder one like dat, Marse Frank, jist let dat Barney speak ter it, an' he bust it all ter pieces, suah," and he grinned again from ear to ear.

Frank indulged in a loud laugh at Barney's expense, and then said to both of them:

"It was the closest call we've had so far. We rubbed the top of it as we shot over it."

"I knows dat. Afore de Lor', Marse Frank, it done made my wool stan' up straight, suah."

"Oh, you were scared too, were you?"

"Yes, sah! Dis was or skeered nigger."

"How about Barney? Was he scared too, do you think?"

"Yes, sah. De trufe was skeered outen 'im. Dat Irisher won't nebbber tell de trufe no mo'."

Frank turned and looked at Barney. That imperturbable son of Erin was wrapped up in his Arctic coat, head and ears, and evidently didn't hear Pomp's remarks.

When he returned to the cabin our hero found the professor still on the bed, but he had regained his composure to a great extent. But he was still concerned about the probable danger of meeting more icebergs, for he asked:

"How high up are we?"

"Oh, we are nearly a mile up, I guess," replied Frank. "Icebergs don't reach quite that high."

"I should hope not. Can you keep up to that height?"

"I don't know, but rather think I can. I don't care to remain up so high unless we make the attempt to get above the snow-clouds."

The professor glared at him and asked:

"Can you do that?"

"Well, I have done it further south. I don't know how high these Arctic clouds run."

That was food for thought with the professor. He lay there in deep study for some time. At last Pomp called all hands to dinner. The professor had no appetite, and did not eat. The fright he had received had broken him all up for that day.

But by night he was himself again. The darkness was intense. No light, save that in the little cabin of the ship, could be seen in any direction. Had there been any lights in that dreary region, the snow-storm would have prevented any view of them, no doubt. Yet it was a dreary, lonesome night to our heroes. They were forced to keep on the wing, and to be on the alert to prevent accidents. Frank saw that he would have to remain awake all through the night, as he knew not how long the storm would continue.

Fortunately, no wind blew after the sun went down. But the snow came down steadily, and the cold increased in volume. Every half hour Barney and Pomp had to shovel the snow out, using scoops and brooms, to prevent the accumulation of snow weighing the ship down. The force of the wind made by the rotascopes swept the top of the cabin clear of snow. It was impossible for snow to accumulate there or on the rotascopes.

At last, about midnight, the storm ceased, and the clouds broke away. The stars came out clear and bright.

Still no light could be seen below. Everything below them was dark as Egypt. They could not even hear the sea.

"We must be a good ways up," muttered Frank, as he listened to catch a sound of the waves dashing against the icebergs. But not a sound did he hear.

Barney and Pomp, now that the snow had ceased falling, were allowed to go to bed. In a little while, the daring young inventor was the only one on board who was awake.

The hours flew slowly by, and at last the gray streaks of dawn began to illumine the east. It was then that he caught a glimpse of the dark-blue sea nearly a mile below. Not until it grew lighter was he able to see the immense snow-capped icebergs that floated lazily about in the bosom of the deep.

Pomp was up before sunrise, preparing breakfast and looking suspiciously at the great icebergs below. The intense cold caused him to shiver every time he had occasion to go out where the raw air could strike him. But he never failed in his work, and at the regulation hour, to the very minute, he announced that breakfast was ready.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG THE ICEBERGS—HARPOONING A SEAL.

THE professor had regained his appetite; Pomp thought it a very ravenous one, for he carried in coffee and hot rolls enough for four, instead of two. Frank always had a good appetite on such occasions, but the cook always knew how to gauge it. With his appetite the professor's good nature also returned. He had a pleasant word for everybody on board.

"Any icebergs around this morning?" he asked of Frank.

"Not one," was the reply.

The reply was a poser, for the professor had looked down and counted at least a dozen large ones.

He glanced at Frank in no little surprise, as if half expecting to hear him say more.

But the young inventor was silent as the Sphinx.

"I don't understand," he finally said. "I thought I saw about a dozen large ones just now."

"Oh, there are plenty of them below," said Frank, "but you asked if there were any around."

"He—he—he!" giggled Pomp, as he busied himself in his capacity as waiter.

"Very good, Mr. Reade, very good!" said the professor, laughing. "Glad to see you in such good humor this morning. It's a good sign."

"Yes, it's a good morning for signs," said Frank. "Just such a morning as I want."

"A beautiful morning, indeed. Do you know what latitude we are in now?"

"No, I do not. We will take our bearing about noon, if the sun continues to shine."

"I'm sure it's cold enough to be in the neighborhood of the Pole."

"Oh, we're not in 2,000 miles of the pole yet," said Frank.

"How do you know that?"

"From what I have read of Arctic travels. We haven't seen half enough ice yet. Just wait till we see one hundred miles of ice on top of water a mile deep, then you may look around for the Pole."

"But just see how cold it is now."

"Yes, and just see that open sea down there," said Frank. "Ships can move about there with the greatest ease. They can't do that if the Arctic regions are as I have read about them."

That silenced the professor, and he went on with his breakfast till he had finished.

Out on deck after breakfast, Frank took his spy-glass and scanned the horizon in every direction. He could see nothing but water and floating icebergs.

"I am going to get down lower," he said, "where I can study those icebergs. I am anxious to get a good view of them."

He accordingly lessened the revolutions of the rotascopes, and the gallant ship began to descend toward the water. Professor Grimm watched the descent with the most intense interest. He kept an eye on the icebergs in front of him, as if half suspicious that some of them might rise on the wing and fall upon the air-ship, and crush it to the bottom of the sea.

But the careful handling of the ship by the young genius soon re-assured him, and in a little while he was contemplating the monster icebergs with all the interest of the true man of science.

Barney and Pomp were amazed beyond measure at the immensity of one of the mountains of ice. They gazed at it in silent awe for a long time, and then Pomp asked the Irishman:

"Dat aint ez big as de Irish ice-cakes, Barney?"

"Bedad!" blurted out the plucky son of Erin, "it's only an Irish hallstone blown away from ould Ireland."

Pomp gave a whoop, and then roared with laughter, in which Barney joined him with good-natured zest.

The rays of the sun were reflected from the icebergs with dazzling brilliancy, and the gentle swelling of the sea slowly moved them to and fro, adding to the weird beauty of the scene.

At one time the ship was in a stone's-throw of one of the largest of the monsters, and the professor tried to calculate its size.

"It must be at least 300 feet high," he said, "an' that will give about 1,500 feet under the water. Just imagine a piece of ice 1,800 feet in diameter."

"Big thing," remarked Frank.

"I should say so. It's worth coming so far to see."

"You will see bigger ones yet, I'm thinking," said Frank. "They grow larger further north. They are North Pole fruit, you know."

"Yes, so they are."

After spending an hour or two slowly sailing round about the icebergs, Frank again sent the ship upwards and off toward the North. As they ascended they could see other great icebergs in the distance, floating lazily southward.

"Have you ever thought of the wisdom of nature in the disposition of the icebergs, professor?" Frank asked of the man of science.

"I have thought a good deal about them," he answered, "yet I am not sure that I understand the full scope of your question."

"I meant to ask if you had given any thought of what finally became of those great mountains of ice—what disposition nature made of them?"

"Ah! I understand you now." Yes. They wander around, sometimes for years, in these seas, accumulating in size all the time. But the currents of the North seas set southward, and by and by they float away toward the sun, and gradually return to sea-water again. Otherwise the whole North Sea would become one vast field of ice, and the sun would never see the face of the water again."

"You are right. These icebergs we are looking at are going southward to meet heat enough to melt them. Ah! there's a field of ice-cakes away out there. They have not stuck together long enough to make mountains of crystal water. We'll go over there and take a look at it."

Frank changed the course of the air-ship a little, and went in the direction of the field of floating ice he had seen. As they neared it he took out his spy-glass and took a squint at it.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "there are seals sunning themselves on the ice! Just look at them!"

The professor took the glass and peered long and silently at the field of ice. He could see the dark spots scattered about on the ice, but could not make out what they were.

"How do you know they are seals?" he asked.

"Because I know they are not bits of ice, and that the seal is about the only animal we shall be likely to find here, under such circumstances."

"Quite right," said the professor; "you reason wonderfully well, Mr. Reade," and he handed the glass back to Frank, who took another look at the seals.

But they soon lessened the distance so as to see the seals with the natural eye. There were hundreds of them, and they were resting in perfect security many miles away from land. Pomp and Barney gazed down at them in awe-stricken wonder, for some of them were big, ugly-looking fellows, that appeared to be able to destroy a full-grown man with the greatest ease.

"Can't we get one of them?" the professor asked.

"Not now," was the reply.

"Why not?"

"There's no place for us to land."

"Why not settle down on the ice itself?"

"For a very good reason."

"Pray, what is it?"

"The bottom of the ship might freeze to the ice and hold us there."

"A very good reason, I am sure," said the professor. "I am learning fast, you see."

"Yes; and you are a very good scholar. I'll give you a certificate when we return south," and both indulged in a quiet little laugh over the matter.

"You are getting down quite close to 'em," said the professor, a little later.

"Yes; I want to give 'em a good scare."

The ship slowly settled down toward the field of floating ice. The seals evidently heard the noise of the revolving rotascope, and lifted their little heads to look around to see whence it came. They had never been accustomed to look for danger from overhead, hence they didn't look in that direction.

"Pomp," said Barney to the old darkey, "git

yer harpoon, an' be afther catchin' one av the bastes."

The idea tickled Pomp immensely. He crept into the store-room, and soon returned with a long, slender harpoon, to which was attached several hundred feet of cord—small, but as strong as steel wire.

This he arranged in the rear of the ship, and placed himself in position to throw when time and opportunity offered.

Lower and lower the ship went, till in a little while it was slowly skimming along not fifty feet above the seals. By that time the timid creatures had become thoroughly alarmed, and began to scramble over the ice in eager haste to get into the water.

Their awkward movements provoked laughter. Though graceful in the water, they are most awkward on land—most ludicrously so.

Suddenly Pomp cast the harpoon. The sharp point pierced a large seal through the body.

"Whoop!" shouted Barney, in his wild, impulsive way. "Be the powers, we've got the baste! Howld to 'im, Pomp! Sure, an' he pulls loike a pig!"

Barney grappled with the line, and aided Pomp in pulling the seal up. He was a good-sized one, weighing about one hundred pounds.

"What have you done there?" Frank cried out when he heard the noise they were making.

"Sure an' it's a woid baste we have caught!" exclaimed Barney, pulling away with all his might.

Frank ran back to see what they were doing, and was much astonished to see them hauling a large seal on board.

The seal was dangerous to handle. He came near getting Pomp's hand in his mouth in his savage rage at being harpooned.

"Kill him!" said Frank, "before he does any mischief. I am sorry you caught him."

The professor was delighted, however, and aided them in killing the timid creature.

CHAPTER XV.

THE LAND OF THE ESQUIMAUX.

THE incident of the seal afforded some diversion for some time. They were all interested in the splendid specimen caught, and the professor had much to say about the habits of the seal. He was deep in book-learning, and knew much about Natural History. Few men had been more studious than he.

Pomp was allowed to skin the seal and keep his coat. But all the rest had to be thrown overboard. The skin was weighed, and the weight entered in the cargo, so that every pound taken on board might be known.

The ship once more rose on the wing, and soared high above the water, the seals, and the icebergs.

"There's land over there on our right, I believe," said Frank, as he leveled the spy-glass in that direction. The distance, however, was so great that he was not able to make out just what it was. He turned the ship in that direction, however, and in another hour knew that he had struck land, though it was several feet under the snow.

"Well, we'll land there, anyhow," he said, "and give the ship a chance to rest."

"But isn't there some danger of the ship getting stuck in the snow?" the professor asked.

"No; I think not. The snow is too dry for that."

They descended until they were within a hundred feet of the earth; then they saw that the snow lay too deep on the ground for them to land with any degree of comfort.

"I'll keep up along the coast," said Frank, after looking at the country for a while. "I don't think it will pay to drop down there in ten feet of snow—at least, I don't care to do so, anyhow."

He accordingly elevated the ship about a thousand feet, and turned northward, keeping the water of the sea just on the left, and the snow-covered land on the right. Everywhere on the right was a white, unbroken surface of snow. Even in the distance, further inland, the undulations of the land were not perceptible at the elevation from which they were viewed.

mile after mile was passed, and still the same dull, monotonous view presented itself. The intense cold rendered Pomp and Barney miserable. They were inclined to nag each other, and several times the young inventor had to interfere to prevent a quarrel.

At last the professor, who had been using the spy-glass to watch the icebergs, suddenly exclaimed:

"I see a thin column of smoke ahead?"

"Where?"

"Just above the land, but a long way off," he replied.

Frank took the glass and made a minute examination of the coast. He was dumb for several minutes, and when he gave the glass back to the professor, he said:

"It is a native settlement."

"Native! You don't mean to say that people live in such a country as this?"

"Yes, I do; and I have no doubt that they think it the finest climate and country in the world."

"What do they live on? How can they live in such a climate?"

"Oh, you'll soon find out all about that," said Frank, laughing. "I never was here before, but I have been in some strange corners of the world, and always found that people could adapt themselves to any circumstances. You'll find the natives here as happy as in any other part of the world."

The ship soon came in view of a collection of small huts, evidently made of skins. The smoke our heroes had seen issued from the tops of the huts, which were very small, and stood but a few feet above the surface of the earth.

Not a soul was in sight when the air-ship hovered above the little settlement, and began settling down near the huts. The wind had swept the side of a hill bare of snow, and it was there our heroes proposed to land.

Just as the ship settled gently down on the ground, a whole batch of Esquimaux dogs came from the huts, barking furiously, as if bent on tearing the intruders to pieces.

"Look out!" cried the professor, making for a gun in the cabin. "The wolves will come aboard of us!"

"Wolves be blowed!" said Barney; "sure, an' didn't yez iver see dogs afore! Bedad, but a dog barks the same the worruld over."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp; "dem dogs bark jes' like any udder dogs, do' dey ain't nebbber seed white folks afore. G'way dar! Ef youse jump up in dis heah ship dis chile'll scald some of dat hair offen youse!"

"Don't hurt 'em, Pomp," said Frank, as he saw Pomp preparing for a possible attack.

"No, sah—not ef dey doan' want none ob my meat."

Just then a number of queer-looking little people, none of them over four and a half feet in height, came out of the huts and gazed at the ship and four men in unbounded amazement. They uttered several queer, guttural sounds to each other, and seemed to be in a fever of excitement. Then one of their number darted into one of the huts, and soon returned with an old man, whom they pushed forward toward the ship, uttering words of a horrible jargon.

The old man came forward, eying our heroes as if half afraid they would do him some harm. He had a pair of clear, sparkling black eyes, and his face was the color of a Chinaman's, and not unlike it in general expression.

"How do?" he said, in broken English, as he came up near the ship.

"Why, hello, old man!" exclaimed Frank. "How do you do!" and he extended his hand to the old man, who grabbed and shook it with great cordiality.

"Me well," he said. "Who you?"

"We are Americans, come up to see your country."

The old man turned and spoke to the natives back of him, and they came crowding around him, peering at the four strangers, as if they regarded them as great curiosities. Pomp seemed to excite their risibles, for they looked at him and laughed in a good-natured sort of way.

Pomp was disposed to get angry, but the professor whispered to him that they had never seen a colored man before, and they, no doubt, thought he had been made black for the purpose of pleasing them. Pomp was mollified, and went about his duties as if nothing had happened to disturb his equanimity.

The old man, who had picked up a little pigeon English from contact with some exploring party in former years, was greatly exercised at the presence of the air-ship so far up from the water. He could easily see that it was a boat, for the vessel was not unlike all other boats in shape.

Looking at the boat, and then casting his eyes at the untrodden snow between the huts and the sea, he asked:

"How come? In boat?"

"Yes," said Frank, "we came in the boat."

The old man looked at him in a quizzical sort of way, and asked:

"How boat come?"

"You will see when we go away. What place is this?"

"Upernavik," was the reply.

"What!"

"Upernavik," said the old man again.

Now Frank had been studying the map of the regions up in that part of the world, and knew that Upernavik was a native town in Greenland, on Baffin's Bay. That he had come so far, and had even crossed Baffin's Bay, he didn't even suspect.

He and the professor examined the map and found Upernavik, but were amazed when they saw it on the land.

"Where are all the people of Upernavik?" he asked of the old man.

"Big Upernavik up that way," replied the old man, pointing up the coast.

"Oh, I understand. This is not the only Upernavik?"

"No; two Upernavik."

"Yes. Can't you make those dogs stop that racket?"

The old man turned to his friends and said something to them, and the whole party wheeled and yelled at the dogs, uttering a single word:

Hak! hak! hak!

The dogs instantly ceased their barking, and slunk away to the huts, into which they crept and kept out of sight.

"Their dogs are well trained, if nothing else is," remarked the professor.

"Good dogs," said the old man, brightening up his sallow countenance. "How boat come here?"

"That seems to bother you a good deal, old man," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

The natives were chattering in their outlandish jargon, and running around the boat, peering under it, as if to ascertain if it had been in the water at all.

At last they came to the old man again, and began an animated wrangle with him. They pointed to the bottom of the boat, and then chattered away at a fearful rate.

"They are uneasy as to what to make us out to be," said Frank to the professor, as he watched them in their excited discussion with the old man, who was their interpreter.

At last the old man turned to Frank, and again asked:

"How boat come?"

"We came that way," said Frank, pointing up toward the blue sky.

The old man was startled.

He said something to those around him, and the whole party stood away, getting further and further away each moment.

They did not enter their huts, but moved back up the hill beyond them, keeping their eyes fixed on the air-ship and the four men on board of her all the time.

"They are afraid of us," said Frank. "We had better go on up the coast to Upernavik, where we can get some news about the country from some of the people there."

Frank set the rotascopes in motion, and as soon as they began to revolve, the natives became greatly alarmed. The old interpreter fell back very hastily, and seemed to be in the greatest fear of his life.

By and by the air-ship rose up in the air. The natives uttered peculiar shouts and fell down on their faces in the snow, where they were still lying when last seen by our hero.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE NATIVES OF UPERNAVIK.

ON the way up the coast, our heroes spent the time gazing at the strange scene below them. It was one they had never witnessed before in all their lives. On the right, as far as they could see, lay an unbroken sheet of snow, covering the whole country, save where some exposed spot gave the wind a chance to drift it. On the left was the water of Baffin's Bay, dark and billowy, with here and there a huge iceberg floating lazily about. The reflection of the sun's rays on some of them made them look more like mountains of crystal. Others were of a leaden color, save where the snow had lodged in the rugged places. Over all this swept a wind that threatened to freeze up all nature. But it seemed colder than it really was, though Barney and Pomp were ready to swear that the whole world was turning to ice. They hugged themselves in their Arctic coats, and looked on in silent wonder at the half-frozen world below.

By and by Upernavik came into view. It was simply a collection of native huts, half under and half above ground. But for the presence of smoke that issued from the huts, they would hardly have known that it was a settlement of human beings.

"What do dem folks lib heah for?" Pomp asked, looking down at the miserable huts below.

"To kape cool, begorra," said Barney.

"How dey git warm?"

"Badad, they niver git warm."

"Dat's er fac," and the darkey shook his head, as if the question had been satisfactorily answered.

Frank touched the little silver crank that controlled the electric machinery of the ship, and they began to settle down toward the earth.

As in the lower village, a dog was the first to discover the presence of strangers, and he set up a furious barking that soon brought out the entire population of the vicinity.

The natives crowded around the air-ship, as if amazed at seeing it so far up from the water. They did not appear to be much surprised at seeing a race of people so very different from themselves. White men had come there in ships before, and nearly every Arctic expedition had touched at that port.

The news ran from mouth to mouth that strangers had suddenly landed in the town, and everybody ran out to see them. Among them were some Danish sailors who were waiting there for tidings from their ship, which had gone farther north on an exploring expedition. But neither Professor Grimm nor Frank could understand a word of Danish. Finally one of the sailors asked, in the language of *La Belle France*, if they could speak French.

"Oh, yes," said Frank, in good French. "I am at home there. What are you fellows doing here?"

"We belong to the good ship *Copenhagen*, which sailed to the north seven months ago."

"Well, why didn't you sail with her?" Frank asked.

"Because we were ill, and she had provisions only for able seamen."

"How many of you are here?"

"Five. One died four months since. Where do you hail from?"

"We are Americans."

At that the sailors indulged in a shout of joy, and caught Frank by the hand, and came near hugging and kissing him. Indeed, he was very much afraid they would, for they were a dirty, greasy-looking set.

"We are so glad to see you!" the Dane exclaimed. "We don't know if the *Copenhagen* is still afloat. We have heard nothing from her since she sailed from here. Where are you going from here?"

"North," replied Frank.

They opened wide their eyes and gazed in unfeigned astonishment.

Then, for the first time, they turned their attention to the air-ship. They would glance at the trim little craft and shake their heads. Then they looked away at the sea and the great icebergs floating about in sight, and shook their heads again.

"You came in that craft?" the Dane asked in French, pointing to the air-ship.

"Oh, yes, we came in that," was the reply, "and we made good time, too."

"The ice will crush it."

"Oh, no. The ice won't hurt us in the least. This boat goes over the ice."

Then they looked at the keel of the air-ship, and saw no runners for traveling on the ice. A general whispering went on among the Danes, as well as the natives.

Then some one of the natives made the discovery that there were no tracks between that part of the village and the ice-bound beach, a half mile away. That caused an uproar of excitement.

"In God's name tell us how you got here!" cried the Dane who was acting as interpreter.

"We came in this ship," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

They would not believe it, and a general buzz of conversation took place all round them. The natives, as well as the Danish sailors, ran round the ship and made hasty examinations of all they could get at.

"It hasn't been in the water at all," said the interpreter, looking suspiciously at our hero.

"Why, who said it had?" returned Frank.

"Only fools come here by sea to get crushed by mountains of ice. We came by air, and snap our fingers at ice and snow."

The interpreter was dumfounded.

He glared at Frank as if he regarded him an escaped lunatic, and then in response to the clamors of those around him, turned and told them what he had said.

They burst into derisive laughter, and nudged each other and winked knowingly. Frank also laughed, and said to the professor:

"They don't believe we can fly. I think we will have the laugh on them when we resume our trip."

"Yes, most decidedly. How long shall we remain here?"

"I don't know. I want to see if I can learn

anything about the country around here before we leave."

On turning to the French-speaking Dane to ask some questions, he found that individual laboring under the impression that all four were cranks who had escaped from some ship in the vicinity.

"We may as well take 'em and all they have," said the Dane to his comrades. "They can't take care of themselves, and they will be lost if they be allowed to go away in such a frail craft as that."

His words were repeated to the natives, and measures were at once taken to arrest all four of our heroes.

Frank saw that something was wrong, as some of the natives began to arm themselves with their peculiar weapons, whilst others crowded up closer to the ship.

"Pomp," said Frank to the faithful black, "turn on the electric current, and keep clear of the guard-rail."

"Yes, sah!" said Pomp, a broad grin illuminating his black face as he went into the cabin to do his bidding.

In the meantime, Frank and the professor had returned on board, and quietly awaited developments.

The natives, headed by the Danes, began to come closer around the ship, and some of the latter acted as though they intended to come on board.

"Tell your friends," said the young inventor, to the interpreter, "that they must not try to board us. We don't allow any strangers on board the ship."

The interpreter smiled, and said a few words to the natives, at which they grinned and crowded closer to the sides of the ship.

Suddenly one of them caught hold of the steel guard-rail, and received the full force of the electric current. In an instant he was dancing up and down, and twisting about in all manner of shapes, yelling like a maniac.

The Esquimaux were doubtless amazed at his actions. They crowded around him, and yelled in unison with him for a few moments.

Then two or three more caught hold of the railing, and the circus increased in interest. They squirmed and whooped, and yelled like so many maniacs, till the balance of the crowd became wild and demoralized.

Thinking the new-comers had bewitched their comrades, they made a rush for the ship, and tried to board her. Frank and the professor remained standing on the little deck looking on the curious scene with a degree of innocence that would have made a stoic laugh.

The uproar became so great, that all the dogs in the village came out and added their voices to swell the din. Women and children joined in.

"This is terrible," said the professor.

"Yes, the noise is," returned Frank. "But they are worse scared than hurt."

Then, turning to Pomp, he motioned to him to throw off the current.

The faithful black did so, and in another moment the whole gang fell in a heap, too exhausted to do anything but moan and groan.

Every one of the Danish sailors had been caught by the electric current. The interpreter was the first man to get on his feet after being released.

"You didn't tell 'em not to try to board us, did you?" Frank asked him.

"Yes," said the rascal, "but they said they would do it."

"Well, they can't board this ship. There are not men enough in the world to do it without our consent."

"What's the matter?" the Dane asked.

"Oh, nothing," was the reply.

But, just as soon as the others could get on their feet, they made haste to get away from such a dangerous and mysterious power as had so mercilessly twisted them double. The crowd, already demoralized, turned and ran, too, and in a few minutes not a soul was in sight.

"I guess that settled 'em," remarked Frank to the professor.

"I should say it did. I never saw such a demoralized set of men in all my life. You are sure you didn't harm any of them."

"Oh, yes. They were badly shaken up. That's all. They'll be all right in a day or two. Never fear about that."

"Well, it was the worst shaking up I ever saw a crowd get. Their eyes seemed to be on the point of bursting out of their sockets."

"Yes, nothing makes a man open his eyes wider than a good electric shock."

"I suppose so. What shall we do now, Mr. Reade?"

"We can do nothing but resume our journey. The weather is favorable, and I think we had better go up and get away. There's nothing to be gained here in this place."

CHAPTER XVII.

NEARING THE POLE—POMP'S DILEMMA.

THE machinery of the air-ship was set in motion, and in a minute or two the triumph of inventive genius was mounting high up above the native town of the frozen north.

The barking of a dog caused one of the natives to put his head outside his miserable hut to see what was going on. He saw the dog looking up at the blue sky and barking, as if he had found fault with the sky itself. Looking up he found the air-ship rising higher and higher in the air. He could scarcely believe his eyes, and a yell brought half the village to his side anxious to know the cause of his excitement. Pointing upwards at the flying ship, he gave another yell, and prostrated himself on the ground. The others looked up and saw their late visitors ascending to Heaven, as they thought, and they, too, prostrated themselves on the ground, thinking no doubt that they had offended a party of angels who had visited the earth.

"They would treat us quite differently now," said Frank, "if we were to drop down on them again."

"Yes. I think they would. Their superstitious fears have been excited."

"Of course. Those rascally Danes are the most superstitious of the lot."

In a little while the village of Upernavik was out of sight.

On the right lay the snow-covered land, stretching away into the illimitable distance, and on the left the sea, with its dark, greenish waters, rolled its waves against floating icebergs as far as the eye could reach.

Professor Grimm was sweeping the horizon with a powerful field-glass, and took in everything. The prospect was a dreary one indeed.

"Land and snow on one side," said he, "and sea and ice on the other, make one feel quite uncomfortable."

"Yes," said Frank. "The prospect is not inviting to emigrants."

"No, indeed. In the torrid heat of summer one might sigh for a sight like this; but having seen it, I prefer the heat always."

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp, who had been quietly listening to the conversation.

"Oh, are you cold, Pomp?" Frank asked, looking suddenly around at his faithful black.

"No, sah, I ain't col'; I's done gone an' froze up, suah."

"Oh, you're frozen, are you?"

"Yes, sah," and he gave a grin that was chilly in its sickness.

"Well, we'll all get warm again when we go back home," said our hero. "Cheer up. We'll reach the North Pole in a week or two, and then we'll see how the world turns around."

"Doan wanten see it," said Pomp, shaking his head.

"You don't?"

"No, sah."

"Why not?"

"'Cos it ain't wuff nuffin'."

"Oh," and the professor burst into a hearty laugh at the reason for the black's indifference.

"Pomp is not far from right," said Frank.

"Maybe so," assented the professor, "but he doesn't know it."

"He believes it, anyhow."

"Yes; but the ice is the father of the belief."

"Of course. Ice will sometimes take all the enthusiasm out of a man."

"So it will. Pomp reasons solely from a physical stand-point. His mental qualities take no part in his judgment in this case."

"Yes, and almost any one else would reason the same way if he was half frozen, as he is."

Pomp listened to the discussion for some time, and wondered what in the wide world they were talking about, when he heard the professor say:

"He knows nothing whatever about science."

"Ef I doan kno' 'bout de science ob cookin', youse done gone mighty hungry afo' now, marse," said Pomp, shaking his head at the professor.

Frank roared.

"That's so, Pomp," admitted the professor, good-naturedly. "You do understand that science to perfection. I give you great credit for your skill in that department."

Pomp grinned from ear to ear at the compliment, and went into the kitchen to begin preparations for the noonday meal.

"Begob, but yez have killed ther nagur," said Barney, as Pomp disappeared in the little kitchen.

"Oh, I guess I haven't hurt him very much," replied the professor, laughing. "I don't think Pomp is very weak in that direction."

"Thin it's little ye know av the nagur," said Barney.

"Sure, an' it's he will forgive yez av ye kick him out av the ship."

"If I have made a friend of him, I am very glad to hear it. I don't know any man whose friendship I prize more, unless it be yourself, Mr. O'Shea."

"Sure, an' wasn't it mesilf as tould the nagur as how yez honor was a gentlemen as soon as I laid me two oyes on ye."

"Ah, I am glad to hear your good opinion of me, Mr. O'Shea," returned the professor, tipping Frank a wink to call his attention to the little mutual admiration society he and Barney had formed.

"Oh, yes," said Frank, joining in, "Barney is a solid man, every time. I never go out on an expedition without them. He is game all over, and isn't afraid of but one thing in the world."

"And what's that?" the professor asked.

"Pomp's head."

"Pomp's head?"

"Yes; his butting machine."

"Oh, I understand. Did Pomp ever butt him?"

"Yes, and laid him out as flat as a pan-cake."

The professor grinned, and Barney felt that he had fallen a few degrees in the estimation of the great man of science. But the professor at once reinstated him in his good opinion of himself by saying:

"That is a mode of fighting familiar to the savage tribes of Africa. I dare say that if our friend from Ireland had a good, old-fashioned shillelah in his hand Pomp's head would get the worst of it."

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Barney, "your honor niver spake a bigger word in your life! Sure an' it's mesilf as would bate the nagur's hid off av him."

"Of course you would, or any other man. It takes an Irishman to know how to handle a stick."

"And a nigger to handle his head," suggested Frank, by way of taffy to Pomp.

"Sure; but ther hid is not made to butt wid," said Barney.

"Pray, what is it for, then?"

"To crack, begorra."

Frank and the professor roared with laughter, for Barney was earnest and innocent in his reply.

Other duties called Barney away at that moment, and thus ended the guying, which our young hero very much enjoyed.

The hours passed, and the sun made a circle almost around the horizon. It dipped down to the very water's edge and seemed to stop there, as if hesitating to go lower. They were entering the region of the long days and nights, which last nearly three months at certain seasons. Even when it disappeared a twilight remained, a golden-tinted halo rising above the sun. Still the air-ship pushed on and on, and by and by the disc of the sun rose above the surface again, and remained near the verge of the horizon.

"Look heah, Marse Frank," exclaimed Pomp, in no little trepidation; "what kinder country am dis, anyhow?"

"It seems to me to be a very cold country, Pomp," replied the young inventor. "What's your idea about it?"

"I dunno, Marse Frank," said he, shaking his head. "Dis am de curiousest country I ebber did see. It's so col' dat eberyting done froze up, an' when de sun goes down de nights hang off jes' like it war erfraid ter come in. What's de matter wid de sun, anyhow—eh?"

Frank and the professor roared with merriment over the perplexity of the cook.

"The sun is all right, Pomp," said Frank; "it's you that's wrong."

"Me! Why, what's de matter wid me, eh?" and his eyes stretched to their widest as he stared at the young hero.

"Why, you simply don't understand things, that's all."

"Dat's er fac'," admitted Pomp, very promptly, "an' dat's what makes me oneasy."

"Oh, you're getting uneasy, are you?"

"Yes, sah, I is, for a fac'."

"Uneasy about the sun?"

"Yes, sah. Er nigger lubs de night as well as de day," and he shook his head in a solemn way.

"Well, you've heard me say that the earth was round, like an apple, haven't you?"

"Yes, sah, heaps ob times."

"Well, we've been traveling up to the top of the apple to where we can almost see over to the other side. The sun goes round the earth, and when we go a little further up we can see it for about three months going round and round, and all the time seeming to be on the point of going down."

"An' de day las' three months, Marse Frank?"

"Yes, about three months."

Pomp shook his head and almost groaned.

"It wouldn't suit you, eh?"

"No, sah!" very emphatically.

"Wouldn't suit darkeys generally, eh?"

"No. De water-million don't grow heah."

"No chicken-coops, eh?"

"Ef dey did, dey doan' do de darkey no good. Der days am too long;" and he gave a grin that told how well he appreciated the character of his race.

In the meantime, the icebergs were getting larger as well as more numerous. They were seen floating in every direction, together with great fields of ice that were many miles in extent. Indeed, it was quite difficult at times to tell where the land ended and the sea commenced, as the snow covered the frozen surface of water and land alike.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A SAIL AT SEA—SNOW-STORM.

SOME two or three days after they left Upernavik, the young inventor was peeping through the ship's spy-glass at an immense iceberg in the distance out at sea. There were many others in sight, but that one seemed to be the father of all. It was a veritable mountain of ice, and pushed all the others out of its way as it floated about in the bosom of the deep.

"By the great sea-serpent!" he suddenly exclaimed, "I see a vessel off to the left of that iceberg."

"Where? Let me see!" cried the professor, quite excited, as he reached out for the spy-glass. "Look on the left of that big one," said Frank, handing him the glass.

Professor Grimm took the glass and gazed long and intently at the ship.

"Yes," he said, "I think it is that Danish ship we heard of at Upernavik."

"Very likely. I am going to run out there and communicate with them."

"By all means. We may be able to be of some service to them."

Frank turned the course of the air-ship, and headed direct for the ship at sea. As he did so he mounted higher in the air, and thus obtained a more extended view of the scene below than he would otherwise have had.

The ship seemed like a mere speck in the open water of the channel—for channel it was—which extended many miles north and south. On either side were immense fields of floating ice, all linked together by Jack Frost's terrible grip.

As the air-ship approached, our hero was on the lookout for the icebergs, which seemed to be lying in wait for the solitary ship that had thus invaded their domain.

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank, after looking around with the glass for some time, "they are rushing on to certain destruction, and don't know it. We are just in time to save them."

"What danger threatens them?" Professor Grimm asked.

"Do you see that channel away toward the north there?"

"Yes."

"The upper end is closed, leaving the channel in the shape of the letter V. Well, the two sides are closing in slowly, but surely, and by and by will catch that ship between them, and crush it as easily as you can crush an egg in your hand."

The professor turned pale.

"That is the fatality of these Arctic expeditions," said Frank. "When two enormous icebergs get a ship wedged in between them, they grind it to powder in a very few minutes. At least that is what I have read about it, and I can easily see how such things could happen."

"Yes, I see it plainly now myself. The sailors on board that ship can't see so far ahead. They think the channel is open all the way, and that they can go through."

"Exactly; and they are rushing on to certain destruction."

"Yes, so they are."

Barney and Pomp looked on in shivering silence, wondering what in the wide world could have caused a ship to come up into such a frozen and desolate region as that.

They had heard the roaring noise made by the ice as two great floating crystal mountains came together, and shuddered to think what the fate of those would be who got caught between them.

By and by they came near enough to the ship in the water for them to make out things on deck. Frank was looking through the ship's glass.

"There's a great commotion on board down there," he said to the professor.

"No doubt of that. They will be amazed at seeing us up here in the air, not having seen anything of the kind before."

"Ah! The captain is staring up at me through his spy-glass! Every man on board is on deck, and the men appear to be greatly excited."

"Of course. That is to be expected."

Frank handed the glass to Professor Grimm,

and again took charge of the helm of the air-ship. In a few minutes they began to settle down toward the vessel, when the excited movements on board could be discerned by the naked eye.

When within five hundred feet of the ship, Frank seized a speaking-trumpet, and sung out in clear, ringing tones:

"Ship ahoy!"

The captain of the vessel took his trumpet, and answered in a tongue our hero could not understand.

"That may be Danish," remarked Frank, "or it may be something else."

"Try them in French."

"All right. I will," and he again placed the trumpet to his lips, and asked in French:

"What ship is that?"

"The *Copenhagen*," was the reply in good French. "What craft are you?"

"The *Eagle*, of Chicago."

There was a pause of several minutes, when the question came up from the ship:

"Are you Frank Reade, the inventor?"

"Yes," answered Frank, promptly. "Who are you?"

"I am Captain Marks. The whole world has heard of you. I knew no other man could sail a ship through the air, and so I asked the question. Where are you bound?"

"To the North Pole."

"So am I; but I may as well go back now."

"Why so?"

"Because you can reach there when no one else can."

"I am not sure that I can. But you must go back at once, or you will be lost."

"How? Why?"

"You are in a channel between two great fields of ice," said Frank. "The upper end is closed, and the sides are closing in on you. In another twenty-four hours you will be nipped."

"Ten thousand thanks! I must tack ship at once!" and the energetic captain turned to his men and gave orders that sent the half-frozen sailors to their posts.

"He has splendid discipline on board there," remarked the professor.

"Yes," assented Frank. "One must have good discipline there if anywhere in the world."

Then he spoke through the trumpet again, and asked:

"How have you fared?"

"Badly. Two men died of cold, two down with scurvy, and five we had to leave at Upernavik."

"We saw your men at Upernavik. They are well, but uneasy about the fate of the ship. Do you need assistance?"

"No; except your guidance out of this channel. Is it open below?"

"Yes; only detached icebergs are floating about."

"I can avoid those."

The ship had veered around, and was slowly tacking about in a southerly course. Frank accompanied them several miles, and saw that they would have a good chance to escape the threatened danger.

Then he exchanged farewells with the Danish captain, and soared upwards again.

Those on board the marine vessel stared up at the one in the air, and wondered if they were not dreaming, or if the intense cold they had been so long exposed to had not so muddled their brains as to make them victims of a peculiar hallucination.

They continued to gaze until the air-ship was out of sight.

"I feel sorry for those poor sailors on that ship," said Frank.

"Yes, so do I," said Professor Grimm. "I was thinking of what they must suffer when you spoke."

"Yes; they have to exercise the utmost vigilance to keep from freezing to death."

"I guess you are right."

"Quite right. I have studied the reports of Arctic navigation, but never realized what it really was till now."

"And we are having an easy time, it seems."

"So we are, but we can't tell how long it will last. It's going to snow again. The sky is becoming overcast, and we may expect a tough time of it."

"Then we had better get back over the land again," suggested the professor.

"Yes, I think so. I'll get over there as quickly as I can," and he at once proceeded to steer in that direction. In an incredibly short space of time, the heavy, leaden clouds precipitated a storm of fine snow that enveloped the air-ship so completely that they could not see from one end to the other. The snow was like fine mustard-seed in size and shape, and from that to a white dust that filled their eyes, ears, noses, and every crevice about the air-ship.

"This is horrible!" exclaimed the professor, making his way to the cabin. "One would freeze to death out there in ten minutes!"

Barney and Pomp had already sought refuge in the cabin, driven in by the intense cold. Frank was in there at the helm. The door was closed, and the windows admitted but a somber light through the snow that was caked against them. Just where the wind was blowing them was what puzzled both Frank and the professor. There were no means to tell in which direction they were going. The compass pointed northward, but whether they were going in that direction they did not know.

Frank knew that their safety depended on their keeping above the earth or water, and that so long as they could do that they were safe. Hence he tried to keep up. The snow filled all the boat outside the cabin, and the weight carried them down without their knowing it.

Suddenly they felt a jar—a dull thud—as if the boat had struck a bed of mud, and then they remained still, their faces as white as the snow around them.

CHAPTER XIX.

FAST ON AN ICEBERG.

THE moment the air-ship struck, Frank stood with his hand on the crank and kept the rotascopes revolving at full speed. He could feel the motion of their rapid revolutions, but yet was convinced that the air-ship itself was not moving.

A puzzled expression came into his face, and he was conscious that the other three men on board were watching him with intense earnestness.

"We are not moving," he said to Professor Grimm, after a long pause.

"Where are we, then?"

"I don't know," and he shut down the crank and stopped the rotascopes. "The snow has weighted us down, and it's a lucky thing we dropped where the snow was deep."

The professor tried to look out of the little window and ascertain something in regard to the situation. But no human eye could penetrate that cloud of fine flying snow.

Barney and Pomp stood still and silent, appalled at the terrible tempest that reigned around them. They could hear a roar that was not like anything they had ever heard before, and it was plain to them, from the expression on the young inventor's face, that they were face to face with a desperate peril.

Frank went to the window and listened, with only the thickness of the glass between him and the howling tempest without. A profound silence prevailed within.

"I think I can detect the sound of waves dashing against something," he finally said, turning to the professor, "though I am not sure of it. See if you can catch the same sounds."

The professor placed his ear at the window, and listened for nearly five minutes.

"I think I do," he said. "We must have settled down near the sea."

"Yes, I think so. We will have to wait here till the storm lets up. It's useless to attempt to unload the snow while it is flying so."

"Of course. It couldn't be done."

"We may have to dig out after it does cease."

"Yes, but that is nothing. We will be warmer under the snow than above it—so I have heard."

"So we will. But we may be snowed under so deep that we can't tell when the storm has passed."

"That is the least trouble we have to contend with. We can stay here a week, if necessary, unless we should suffer for fresh air."

"No danger of that. The temperature will purify the atmosphere, and the snow is not dense enough to stop the air. I am beginning to feel warmer now."

"So am I. The storm seems to be less violent, too."

"So I was thinking. But we can't tell yet," and the young inventor looked at the window, against which the snow was now banked, and wondered if he could open it and get any definite idea as to the situation outside.

"I am going to see if I can hear anything outside," he said, and with that he slid the window back and exposed a wall of snow beyond. By applying his ear almost against the snow, he heard sounds that convinced him that the storm was still raging.

Closing the window, he said:

"The storm still rages. We are snowed under, and will have to wait till it is over. If it gets too close for us we can dig a hole to the surface for fresh air."

He sat down and prepared to make himself as comfortable as possible, and the professor was about to do the same thing, when a heavy boom

was heard, and those on their feet in the little cabin staggered half-way across it.

Frank sprang to his feet and glared like one in a terrible suspense.

Then he felt the air-ship reel like a vessel in the billows—slowly and majestically.

"What in heaven's name is the matter!" gasped Professor Grimm, his face white as a sheet.

"I don't know," said Frank; "I don't understand it. It could not have been an earthquake."

"No, not in these latitudes."

Pomp groaned.

Barney looked ashen-hued in the face, and crossed himself several times.

"Boom!" came another thump, and the ship trembled from stem to stern, and reeled to and fro as though on the crest of a mighty wave, or swell of the sea.

"Ah!" ejaculated Frank, "I know what it is now!"

"What is it?" gasped Professor Grimm.

"We have settled down on top of an iceberg, and the waves are beating against it!"

"The saints preserve us!" groaned Barney.

"De good Lor' save us!" moaned Pomp, trembling from head to foot.

"We are in great peril, then," said the professor.

"Yes," answered Frank, "in very great danger," and the two men looked each other in the face in profound silence for a minute or two. But for the dull, roaring noise of the elements outside, they could have heard the beating of their hearts.

They could distinctly feel the swaying of the ship, for they had to brace themselves to keep their balance.

"Boom!" came another mighty wave, and it seemed to have increased in volume since the other one struck.

"Light up, Pomp," said Frank. "It's getting too dark in here."

"Yes, sah," said Pomp, and in a couple of minutes one of the cabin lamps was lighted.

"We may have settled down in a gorge or crevice on the top of the iceberg," remarked Frank, who saw the necessity of reassuring the others. "If so, we are safe, unless the iceberg should capsize. But I don't think there is much danger of that;" and as he reasoned, his own courage, in a measure, returned to him.

"If we only knew the real danger," sighed Professor Grimm.

"Yes, for then we might be able to meet it in some way. We must try and get the snow off the ship, so we can mount up in the air again."

"An' go back home 'ergain," suggested Pomp, in a trembling voice.

"Yes, I would rather be at home than here," said the professor.

"Oh, you didn't expect a summer picnic, did you, professor?" Frank asked.

"No, not exactly; but I did expect that we would escape the ordinary dangers of the Arctic navigator. Here we are, on an iceberg, under I don't know how many feet of snow."

"That is something I did not expect myself," admitted Frank, "but I am not discouraged. When the snow is too heavy for us we have to take the chances. Here, bring me that rope under my bed, Pomp."

"Yes, sah;" and Pomp brought the rope and laid it at his feet.

Frank took one end of the rope and tied it around his body.

"What are you going to do?" Professor Grimm asked, as he noticed his preparations.

"I am going to dig out of this snow, and see where we are," he replied. "This is a precaution against accidents."

"Yes, I see."

"If I give a signal by jerking hard on the rope, you three must pull me in. If I stay out too long, jerk me two or three times, and if I don't return the jerks, pull in. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," all three replied.

Then he opened the door, and pushed out into the wall of yielding snow.

The professor closed the door to keep out the snow, and Frank began to dig out, packing the snow under his feet till he raised himself several feet. During all this time the thunderous roar and booming of the angry waves against the iceberg was heard.

Suddenly he reached the surface of the snow. A fierce wind was blowing, and the air was full of fine snow, driven by the wind.

But he could see that the fury of the storm had abated, and that it was practically over.

Yet the scene was an appalling one to contemplate.

The air-ship had settled on an immense iceberg in a sort of gorge on the top of it, and the wind had drifted the snow quickly over it. Thus it was he understood why the air-ship had not

slid off into the water when the waves caused the iceberg to roll.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as he glared around at the scene of frozen desolation, "this is terrible! If the iceberg should careen or part we would all go down to death."

He made the aperture in the snow as large as possible, and then went back down into the cabin to warm himself, and report.

"Where are we?" Professor Grimm asked.

"Oh, we are on an iceberg."

"Howly mither o' Moses!" groaned Barney.

"De Lor' save us!" moaned Pomp.

"What is the danger?" the professor asked.

"We don't seem to be in any very great danger just now. But we may run against another iceberg, and there is no telling what may result. We must get away as quickly as possible."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, who was now all eagerness to go to work to dig out of the snow.

"Then let's get to work at once," suggested Frank, rising and going into the store-room in search of such things as he thought would be necessary to the work.

In a few minutes they were all four at work clearing away the snow. The boom—boom of the waves against the mountain of ice made them feel that they could not get away from it a moment too soon. The wind made it truly difficult to keep the snow out, as it drifted rapidly, and gave them all they could do.

But they stuck to the work bravely, the professor working as hard as the rest, throwing the snow like a regular shoveler.

"I think we can rise now," said Frank, after two hours of hard work. "We must get away from here as soon as possible. Put up your shovels, and let me try the rotascopes."

They got out of the way, and the young inventor set the machinery in motion. The rotascopes revolved rapidly, but the ship did not move an inch.

"We are stuck to the ice," said Frank, "and will have to cut loose. Get the axes, Pomp."

Pomp got the axes. They tied ropes around their waists as a measure of precaution.

Barney was the first to go over.

The moment his feet touched the ice, they disappeared from sight as if by magic, pulling the rope after him like a whale running away with a harpoon in his side.

"De Lor' gorrarnighty!" exclaimed Pomp, grasping the rope with both hands and trying to stem the Irishman's descent. "Barney is er gone Irish, suah!"

CHAPTER XX.

BARNEY'S PERIL.

BARNEY'S sudden descent under the snow created no little consternation on board the air-ship, and Pomp's exclamation brought Professor Grimm and the young inventor to his assistance. All three held on to the rope, and began pulling on it with all their might.

"He signals us to pull him up," cried Frank. "Pull away, now. Steady! Up with him."

They pulled and pulled, and it seemed as if the snow had banked heavily against them to prevent his rescue. But he came up slowly, and at last they could hear him moaning and groaning just a few feet under the loose snow.

"Dat youse, Barney?" Pomp asked, as soon as they got him up against the side of the ship.

"Yis, begorra," came up from the white object, "an' more dead than alive."

They hauled him on board, where he lay down on the deck, too much exhausted to even stand on his feet.

"Take him in the cabin, Pomp," ordered Frank, "and give him some hot coffee to warm him up. Professor, hold to my rope, please, while I drop down over on this side."

The professor held the rope, and our hero sprang over the opposite side, to land on solid ice. He at once proceeded to make sure of his footing, and then set to work to ascertain where the trouble was.

By and by Pomp came over to his assistance, and in a few minutes they had cut the ship loose from the ice.

"Now get on board, quick," he said to Pomp, "and we will be off. The sea rolls higher and higher, and we may slide under the snow, as Barney did."

Both he and Pomp climbed back into the ship, and the machinery was again set in motion. As the rotascopes revolved they threw the snow in every direction.

Suddenly the ship rose from her icy bed. The sides struck against the wall of snow on the right, and then soared upward.

Pomp was so overjoyed at the escape that he cheered like a wild lunatic, and Barney scrambled to his feet and rushed out to see what it was

all about. When he saw that the air-ship was sailing above the sea and icebergs, he joined in the cheers with an old-fashioned Irish whoop.

Just a minute or two after the air-ship rose above the iceberg, a terrible grinding, crashing noise was heard below them, and on looking down they saw a sight that made them shudder. Two immense icebergs had floated up against each other. They were too large and heavy to touch each other and then bound back. They rubbed so hard that pieces of ice flew in every direction, and the noise of their breaking was like the crashing of a mountain of glass.

"Just in time," said Frank, as he gazed at the terrible scene below.

"Yes," said the professor. "We have made a very narrow escape, indeed. Certain destruction would have followed a longer stay of five minutes on that spot."

The wind blew strong, and sent the air-ship westward instead of north, and the young inventor was forced to turn and face the wind, in order to avoid being blown out to sea.

Of course they made but little headway against the wind, and they could observe the fact by noting the position of the icebergs below. As for going northward, that was out of the question for the present.

In the meantime, Barney had recovered from the effects of his mishap, and was doing his duty like a man. But every time he thought of the terrible slide down the side of the iceberg, under twenty feet of snow, his hair would rise and a cold chill creep up his spinal column.

"Bedad!" he exclaimed, in speaking to Pomp about it, "it wur the worst fright I iver had in me loife. Sure, an' didn't I think av all meshort-comin's whin I wint down? Be the powers! but I had the big scare all over me."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp; "dat was de closest call ye ebbid did hab, Barney. Golly, but youse went down as fas' as er rock."

"Dade I did, an' whin yez pulled me up it was loike breakin' ivery bone in me body. Sure, an' I am sore all over," and he shrugged his shoulders as if to test the extent of his injuries.

The professor sat down by his side and asked him many questions about his sensations as he went down, and among others, said:

"You went very fast from the way the rope followed you. Do you recollect what your thoughts were at the time?"

"Yis, sor."

"What did you think?"

"Bedad, I thought Barney O'Shea had been in many a hot place, to be buried aloive in a sea av oice."

"Oh, you realized your danger?"

"Sure, an' wouldn't I? Be ther powers, it was mesilf as wur slidin' down under the snow loike a fish under the wather."

"The land must be a good ways off, professor," said Frank, interrupting the man of science. "I can't get a glimpse of it in any direction. There's no telling where or how far the wind carried us in that storm."

The professor went out and took a look at the situation. The air-ship had now reached an altitude that put it above the cloud of drifting snow lower down.

"The land is not very far away," he said, looking around at Frank.

"How do you know that?"

"Because this drifting snow comes from the land, and not the water," was the reply.

"True as gospel!" exclaimed Frank. "I never thought of that. You have hit it just right. Some of it must have come from the icebergs, but not all; I'll keep on, and trust to luck."

"You want to land?"

"Well, I would rather have the land under me than the water," was the reply.

"So would I. What do you think became of that Danish ship?"

Frank looked at the professor and made no reply. But the look of horror that came into his face told but too plainly what his thoughts were.

"Yes," said the professor, "I fear the ship and all on board were lost."

"I don't know but what they had time enough to pass out of the channel between the two fields of ice," remarked Frank.

"Even then, how could they survive such a storm of wind and blinding snow as that was?"

"I am sure I don't know, but I have read of seamen passing through such terrible storms and perils that I am prepared to believe anything possible with them."

"Well, I hope they did escape, but I am unable to see how they could. Ah! The sunshine is out again, but there is no warmth to it."

"No. We can't expect heat from a sun just peeping over a land of snow and sea of ice."

"True. Now, what shall we do?"

"Push forward till we reach land again. That's the first thing to be done."

Two hours later they obtained sight of the land. It was covered with snow, which the wind was drifting in a fine white mist seaward. The air-ship passed about five miles up the coast, and there found a spot where the wind had swept the snow away and left the earth bare. But little snow was then drifting, and our heroes proceeded to settle down there, for the purpose of making a thorough inspection of the ship, to see if any damage had been done by the iceberg.

Slowly they descended, and finally the ship settled down easily on the ground, and the rotascopes folded their wings like immense umbrellas.

"I am glad to get on *terra firma* once more," remarked the professor, as he sprang out on the frozen ground.

"What's dat, marsa?" Pomp asked.

"What's what?"

"Dat 'ar ting youse glad ter git on," hereplied.

"Oh, *terra firma*?"

"Yes, sah—dat's it."

"Why, that's the earth."

Pomp opened wide his eyes and stared, whilst Frank and the professor quietly smiled at him.

"Sure, an' how eud the nagur know," said Barney, laughing heartily at Pomp's puzzled expression. "That does he know about Graik, I'd loike ter know."

"Shet yer mouf, Barney," growled Pomp; "youse don't know nuffin'."

"Oh, no, av coorse not," and the grin on Barney's face was too exasperating for Pomp to endure in silence.

"Look heah, you Irisher!" he growled; "ef I butts yer you won't know nuffin'—ye heah dat?"

"Here! stop that and help scrape the ice and snow off this side of the ship," said Frank; and they both sprung forward to obey.

CHAPTER XXI.

A FIGHT WITH POLAR BEARS.

AFTER a thorough examination it was found that no harm had been done to the ship. Frank was in the best of good humors when he made the discovery.

"The little ship can stand a great deal," he said. "We may have to go through even worse than this experience of to-day."

"God forbid!" exclaimed the professor.

"Amen!" assented Pomp.

Barney muttered a short prayer. His slide on the iceberg had been enough for him. He didn't want any more.

"Let us have a good dinner, Pomp," said Frank, after a pause; "we will stay here for a day or so and overhaul the ship. We can't be too careful, you know."

Pomp hurried with his preparations for dinner, and in a few minutes the odor of cooking was wafted away by the cold breeze. All hands were hungry, and waited impatiently for dinner to be announced.

Suddenly Barney sprang up and pointed to something white rolling about in the snow at the foot of the hill. They all gazed at it, and came to the conclusion that it was either a native or some animal.

"There are but few animals in this latitude," said Frank, "and of them the white bear is quite numerous and dangerous. Get the guns, Barney, and let's be ready for anything that may turn up."

Barney hastened on board, and soon returned with two rifles, one of which he handed to Frank and the other he kept himself.

"Get the professor's gun, Barney," Frank ordered; and the Irishman obeyed in silence.

All three thus armed, they stood still near the ship and watched the disturbance in the snow at the foot of the hill.

"Whatever it is," remarked Frank, "it is coming this way. I can see where it has made a path through the snow from around that snow-bank over there."

"Yes—and it is making its way in this direction," said the professor, in a trembling voice.

"By all the saints!" ejaculated Frank, "it's a Polar bear!"

"A white bear?"

"Yes."

The professor backed up against the ship, and waited there with determination in his eyes.

"Keep cool, now," said Frank. "They are very hard to kill. But a bullet in the brain will kill any animal in the world. Just wait till he shows himself good, and then, at the word let him have it right between his eyes."

The professor was nervous, but kept his position near the ship's side, whilst Barney and Frank kept near each other in their original places.

By and by the bear got over the little bed of snow and came out on the land at the foot of the hill, where he stopped and sniffed the air.

"The smell of the dinner has brought him out," said Frank to Barney.

"Yis, sor, an' we'll make a dinner av him, sure," returned the brave Irishman, as he held his rifle in readiness to fire at the word.

"So we will. Keep cool, and when I give the word let him have it right between the eyes. They are hard to kill, but two or three bullets in the head will lay him out as cold as the snow itself."

"Sure, thin, an' we'll ate him for dinner?"

As if satisfied that there was something good to eat up on the little hill, the monster bear started slowly to ascend it.

When within some thirty yards of our heroes, Frank and Barney leveled their rifles at him.

"Let him have it!" said Frank.

Crack!

The two rifles made almost but one report, and the bear staggered as if astonished. The next moment he uttered a frightful roar, and rose on his hind feet. He rubbed his head with his fore paws as if a dozen hornets had settled there. Blood poured down over his white coat, but he seemed to have gathered fresh energy from the smell of powder, and in another moment he was charging up the hill, roaring like a lion.

The first roar brought Pomp from the kitchen. He saw at a glance that an immense bear was attacking the camp, and away he dashed for a weapon.

By the time he returned, the professor was climbing on board with the agility of a squirrel, too nervous to think of firing at the enemy.

Barney stood his ground by the side of the young inventor, and leveled his rifle for another shot. All the rifles were repeaters of the finest make in the world, so our heroes had nothing to fear, if they kept cool and stood their ground.

"Let him have it again, Barney," said Frank, and both fired another volley.

Such a terrible roar as burst from the monster! By some strange accident, no bullet had penetrated his brain.

Two balls had struck his hard head in such a position as to glance off, tearing up the scalp in a frightful way.

Maddened by his wounds, he came up the little hill with the shambling gait peculiar to bears, roaring with terrific savageness.

Crack!

Crack!

Barney and Frank gave him a third volley, and still he came on.

Suddenly Pomp fired from the ship, after taking a deliberate aim, and the white monster rose on his haunches, pawing the air and making the very ground tremble with his roar. Then he fell over backwards, rolling over and over, kicking and scratching without aim.

"That settled him!" cried Frank, looking back toward the ship and seeing Pomp with a smoking rifle in his hands.

"Yes, sah, dat done settled him," said Pomp, proudly. "Dis chile doan' do no shootin' for nuffin', he don't."

"He was hard to kill. Where did you hit him, Pomp?"

"Eye, sah—in de eye."

"It was a good shot."

"Yes, sah—it was for er fac'"; and the black cook came down to take a look at the monster.

"Where is Professor Grimm?" Frank asked.

"In de ship, sah, skeered 'most ter def," replied Pomp.

"Somehow the professor can't get over his fear of bears. It's a most singular thing."

"Dat's er fac', sah."

The bear was an enormous one, larger than any Frank had ever read of in all his reading. His body was almost as big as that of a full-grown ox.

"He will weigh nearly 2,000 pounds," said Frank, as he surveyed the monster and watched his death-gasps. "He would have ruined the ship had he reached it. Just look at his claws! They are five inches long, and like hooks of steel."

"Bedad, an' it's mesilf as hopes his mate isn't tough."

"So do I, Barney," and Frank laughed gleefully. "A good tender, fresh bear-steak wouldn't be bad, eh?"

"Faith, but it's moighty foine atin' at any toime, I'm thinking."

"Yes; you are thinking right, then. Ah! here comes the professor. We've got him, professor—the biggest one I ever saw in all my life."

Professor Grimm came up, and looked silently down at the dead monster.

"Mr. Reade," he said, "he was as large as an ox."

"Yes. I never heard of such a big one before."

"Nor I. When I saw him coming up the hill, and recollecting how I had read of their great

tenacity of life, I became demoralized and fled on board the ship."

"So you did," and Frank smiled.

"I couldn't help it. I grow very nervous when I see a—"

The professor wheeled, and dashed away up the hill again as fast as his heels could carry him, leaving the others amazed at his singular proceeding.

"Howly Moses!" gasped Barney, looking down at the spot where they had first seen the bear. "Thar's a nest av thim!"

CHAPTER XXII.

A BATTLE WITH POLAR BEARS.

The cause of the professor's sudden flight and Barney's excited exclamation was soon understood.

Frank and Pomp naturally turned and gazed in the direction whence came the first bear.

To their great surprise, not to say astonishment, they saw three large Polar bears struggling in the deep snow-drift at the foot of the hill, trying to get over to the little party.

No wonder Barney had cried out that there was a whole nest of them.

The smell of blood, no doubt, had made them more than usually savage.

"Take the middle one, Pomp—Barney and I will look after the others."

"Yes, sah," said Pomp, as coolly as an old veteran, leveling his repeating rifle at the head of the one in the middle of the Bruin party.

Frank and the Irishman also took deliberate aim at the other two, and pulled triggers.

Crack—crack—crack!

The three shots were almost simultaneous.

Pomp's bear got a bullet squarely through the brain, and so dropped down in the agonies of death.

The other two were badly hurt.

Maddened by the pain of their wounds, they uttered fierce growls and turned on each other, and began the most terrific battle our heroes had ever seen.

With roars that made the very earth tremble, they bit and tore till both were covered with blood and frightful wounds.

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Barney, as he gazed at the awful death-struggle between the powerful beasts, "it's thim as bates the worruld for foighting."

"I never saw anything like it," said Frank. "They will kill each other."

"Hi, dar!" cried Pomp, in a fever of excitement, as he saw one bear clutch the other by the throat. "Dat b'ar is er goner, suah! Oh, de Lor' s'abe us! Jes look at dat! Golly, but dey is mad!"

The terrific battle continued some ten minutes or more, by which time one of the monsters went down, too weak from loss of blood. The other held on to his throat, tearing him savagely with fangs and claws till he no longer moved or resisted. Then the victor, weak himself from wounds, staggered around, growling and shaking his head as if the bullet from Barney's rifle still troubled him. Finally, he began making a meal of his dead foe.

"Here, we want that for ourselves, Mr. Bruin!" cried Frank, taking deliberate aim at the bear's ear and pulling the trigger.

The bullet penetrated the bear's brain. He sprang up, struck at space with his immense paws, and then rolled over on the hard, frozen ground, now red with the gore of combat.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, dancing around like a school-boy and throwing his hat in the air. "Four av thim in wan day. Hooray!"

Pomp grinned from ear to ear as he crept softly forward to get a closer view of the dead monsters. There they were—four terrible animals, whose savage ferocity was known the world over. There was a broad grin on his black face as he walked around them, for he knew that two of them had succumbed to his unerring aim.

"Dey was mighty big 'uns, Marso Frank," he remarked, shaking his head.

"Yes, the largest I ever saw or heard of," Frank replied.

"Bedad, its mesilf as hopes they are not too big to ate," suggested Barney.

"Oh, they'd be good to eat if they were as large as elephants," said Frank, looking after the charges in his rifle. "I say, Pomp."

"Sah?"

"You and Barney had better take off those skins as soon as possible, as they might freeze."

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'," and Pomp started to the ship at once after his knife, for the purpose of removing the bear-skins.

"Take these rifles, Barney," the young inventor said to the Irishman, "and recharge them.

We don't know how soon we may need them again. Polar bears won't do to trifle with."

Barney went back to the ship and busied himself reloading the rifles, whilst Pomp was getting ready to attend to the dead bears.

In the meantime, Professor Grimm came down from the ship and inspected the dead game. He shuddered from head to foot as he looked at them.

"They were terrible monsters," he said. "I was never born to be a hunter of wild beasts. The sight of one of these animals coming toward me utterly unnerves me. I can't help it, even though I know that I hold a trusty weapon in my hands."

"It is nervousness," Frank remarked. "One can't help that, you know."

"Yes; but yet one ought to show a little more courage, it seems to me."

"Oh, that is not a test of courage in the strict sense of the word, as it has no moral aspect to it. You see we have plenty of fresh meat now."

"Yes—more than we can use in a long time. What will you do with it?"

"Oh, we'll use it as long as we can, and take with us as much as we dare to."

"How much of it can we carry?"

"Several hundred pounds, if necessary. We can save at least a month's supply out of it."

"Then it was a good thing for us that we came here."

"Yes, indeed, for we needed a change of diet very much. We will stop here a day or two and get our bearings, as well as lay in a supply of fresh water."

"Why, how will you get any fresh water here?" the professor asked, in no little surprise. "There are no fresh-water streams about."

"Oh, you are very much mistaken, professor."

"Am I? I don't see any river or other stream."

"That's strange, when all this now is fresh water."

The professor gave him a glance that told him how quickly he saw the point.

"You are right. Snow-water is the purest we can get."

"Of course it is, and I am going to lay in a supply of it."

By this time Pomp came down to where they were standing, prepared to skin the four bears. He carried in his hands a couple of formidable-looking knives. One was for Barney, who soon followed him from the ship, bringing with him two rifles, which he had carefully reloaded.

Handing the two rifles to Frank to keep whilst he and Pomp were at work, he took one of the knives from the black, and proceeded to interview one of the dead bears.

They were enormous fellows, and were easily handled. Frank and the professor had to help them finally. It took them two hours to do the job, after which the huge skins were stretched out on the hard ground, where they soon froze hard and stiff as boards.

The skins removed, Pomp soon cut off the hams, and carried them up to the ship.

"We can let the rest of the carcasses remain here as a bait for more," said Frank. "If any more bears come they will attack the carcasses here instead of the ship, and we can have a fair show at them."

"I hope we shall not receive any more such visitors," said Professor Grimm. "I don't care to make their acquaintance. The truth is, I don't like Arctic society, anyway."

Frank laughed good-naturedly, and remarked: "They gave us a little diversion from the monotony of the voyage, professor."

"So they did; but it was a diversion not much to my taste."

"Oh, well, you can taste of some of the steak. Maybe that will compensate you in a measure for the terrible fright they gave you."

"It will certainly be some satisfaction to me, anyway."

As soon as he could resume his cooking, Pomp proceeded to prepare a meal of bear-steaks. He knew how to cook them to perfection, and in a little while the savory odor of broiling steaks filled the air.

"They smell delicious," remarked the professor.

"And they eat as good as they smell," said Frank, leading the way toward the ship.

And he was right.

Professor Grimm thought he had never tasted such delicious steaks in all his life. They all ate heartily, and thanked the good fortune that sent the four bears in their way.

The meal over, our heroes sat down to smoke their pipes and ponder on the situation.

They had not long been seated, however, when they heard the barking of a number of dogs. They all sprang to their feet and looked around, half suspecting that a lot of wild Esquimaux dogs were coming down on them.

But they soon understood the cause of the

noise. A party of natives, in sleighs drawn by dogs, came bounding over the snow toward the ship. There were five sleighs, and a little chunky native was seated in each sleigh, as cozily as a baby in its cradle.

"Be the powers!" exclaimed Barney, as he gazed at the party, "the b'y as wud go sleighing an' lave his girl at home is a dorthy blaggard."

"Oh, it's too cold for the girls to come out," suggested Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

"Sorra abit av it," replied Barney. "If the b'y wud hug his girl she'd skim the oice wid him till Ould Nick wur frozen out. Pwhat de yez want here, blaggards?"

"Just leave 'em to me, Barney," said Frank, quite severely.

The natives were amazed at seeing a vessel upon the hill, high and dry, and glared around at our heroes in unfeigned astonishment. They were not aware of the presence of the strangers on the coast till they came suddenly on the air-ship.

The dogs barked furiously, for they got a smell of the fresh blood, and were so hungry as to be almost ungovernable. Not until their owners lashed a few of them severely did they quiet down and become submissive.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A WINDFALL FOR THE NATIVES.

As soon as quiet was restored, Frank spoke to the one nearest to the ship, and extended his hand toward him. The native uttered a peculiar guttural sound, and getting out of his sled, approached and took his hand.

Then he spoke a few words to his comrades, all of whom left their sleds and crowded around him. Their jabbering then began, and Barney spoke up, saying:

"Pwhy don't ye spake loike dacent Christians?"

They jabbered back at him, and then extended their hands to him.

"Faith, an' it's mesilf as won't spake wid haythens," said Barney, drawing away in disgust.

"Shake hands with them, you fool," said Frank, angered at the Irishman's unreasonable prejudice. "Politeness is appreciated the world over, and never does any harm."

"Bedad, but they are haythens all the same," said Barney, reluctantly extending his hand, which the chunky little black-eyed fellows took and shook heartily.

Frank then addressed them in both English and French. They shook their heads and showed that they didn't understand anything he said.

"They have no interpreter," he said, turning to the professor. "We shall have to depend on signs to make them understand us."

"Yes; there's no other way."

Frank then began trying to get them to say where they lived, but they could not get at his meaning.

Then they began a series of sign-making that set our heroes to thinking how little they knew of that very ancient art.

They asked all about the ship, particularly as to how it came to be so high up on the land. Of course, Frank could not explain it to them so as to make them understand that it was an air-ship. Such a thing they could not comprehend, not having ever heard of anything of the kind.

At last one of the natives saw the carcasses and skins of the four dead bears half-way down the hill, and a great hullabaloo was the result. They ran hither and thither, making signs with such eagerness, as well as jabbering away like so many magpies, that our heroes could understand nothing in particular.

"I guess they are hungry," remarked the professor to Frank, "and want some of the bear-meat."

"Oh, they can have it all if they wish," said he, descending from the ship and going down to where the carcasses and skins lay. There he made signs to them to help themselves.

They gave screeches of delight, and sprang like hungry wolves on the carcasses. Each man loaded his sled with as much as he could carry, and then began to feed his dogs with the rest. The hungry dogs never had such a sumptuous meal before in all their lives. They ate ravenously until they could eat no more. Then they lay down on the cold ground, happy and contented.

"I guess dem dogs doan' want no more supper ter-night," said Pomp, as he looked at the faithful canines.

"Bedad, they could ate it av they had it, the bastes!" said Barney. "Sure, an' did yez iver say such hungry bastes in yer loife?"

"I never did," remarked the professor, who

was profoundly interested in all he saw and heard.

"I'll give 'em the skins, too," said Frank, "as we have no use for them."

"They would be very valuable in New York," suggested the professor.

"So they would; but they weigh over one hundred pounds each. It is impossible to carry them."

"Yes, that's so. Give them to the poor fellows. They need them bad enough in such a climate as this."

Frank offered them the immense skins. They could not believe their eyes for a minute, and they stared at him, as if to make sure they were not dreaming.

He repeated his offer, and then, with howls of delight, they sprang upon the skins and dragged them to the sleds. They were overloaded, but little they cared for that. They were greedy in everything, and would have tried to carry away the ship itself, if permission had been given them to do so.

"We could never get any information out of those fellows," said Frank, as he watched them loading up their sleds. "They don't know what is meant by the North Pole and the open Polar Sea, and other things the world is interested in."

"You are right," assented the professor. "They teach their children nothing but to earn a living in this inhospitable climate—to catch fish, and kill seals and bears with their rude weapons."

"That's all. I've never read of any schools being in these regions."

"No; nor will you ever read of such things, because they do not exist. I believe they are preparing to leave."

"Yes, I think they are. I wonder where they live?"

"They must live near here, as they don't go very far from home without a supply of provisions with them. At least, that's what I have read of them from other explorers."

The natives, having packed everything snugly in their sleds, were now ready to go. They were going to walk, as the dogs had as much as they could carry already. They came to Frank and made gestures that were evidently meant as thanks for his generous gift.

"Oh, that's all right," said Frank, smiling and shaking hands with each of them.

They called out to their dog teams, and in an instant every dog was up and ready to start. At the word, away they went, the little yellow, chunky men trotting alongside the sleds, happy in the thought that they had a better supply of food than had fallen to their lot in many a month.

"They are a strange people," said Frank, as he saw them disappear over the hill.

"Yes, very strange, and yet they seem to be happy enough."

"They don't know any other world but their own frozen one."

"No; and hence, seem to be contented."

"Yes. But look out there on that floating field of ice. There is a big flock of seals."

They gazed in the direction indicated, and saw some parts of the ice almost covered with seals.

"Ah! we ought to have a seal-hunt once in our lives," suggested the professor.

"But we know nothing about the sport," replied Frank. "All we can do is to shoot them. The first shot will drive them all into the water."

"You have harpoons on board."

"Yes; but none but natives know how to run on the ice and harpoon seals. Let's take our guns and go down there. We can kill a few and have a little sport."

They took their guns and made their way down to the beach, where the great field of ice was floating slowly by to the south-west.

So vast was the field of ice that several large icebergs were locked in it, and carried along in its resistless sweep. When a part of it struck the shore it was driven two hundred feet up the hill, such was the pressure behind it. The noise made by the slowly-moving mass was like that which constantly reminded one of something breaking up and going to pieces. A continuous crash was going on, and at times the noise was almost deafening.

"I don't know that it would be wise for us to go out on that ice," said Frank, stopping at the edge of the floating field and gazing out on the awful spectacle.

"Why not?" the professor asked.

"Because it is continually breaking up. We don't know at what moment a grand crash might take place right under our feet and destroy us all."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, stepping back a few feet. "I doan' want'er go out dar nohow."

"P'what's the matter wid ye, Pomp?" Barney asked.

"Nuffin' de matter wid me," said Pomp, shaking his head.

"Bedad, I thought ye wur sick."

Barney was disposed to make game of Pomp, as well as display his own reckless courage. He stepped upon the ice, and started forward to get a shot at the unsuspecting seals a quarter of a mile away.

"Look out for a fall, Barney," said Frank, as he saw the ice bulging up and cracking in numerous places.

His voice had scarcely died away, ere Barney lost his footing and fell heavily on the ice.

"Hi, dar, yer Irish!" cried Pomp. "Wha' fo' yer walk on yer head?"

Barney pulled himself together and resumed his journey over the ice in the direction of the seals. Had the surface been smooth and unbroken he would have had but little trouble. But such was not the case. On the contrary, it was broken up and lumpy. In some places were hills of ice ten, twenty and sometimes fifty feet in height.

As he neared the spot where the seals were amusing themselves on the ice, he crept round so as to get an iceberg between himself and them. Thus screened, he pushed forward, intending to burst upon them and get in several shots before they could scramble back into the water.

Frank, Pomp, and the professor watched him from the shore with no little interest. They saw him reach the iceberg unperceived by the seals, and creep around to the farther side to get a shot at them.

For some five minutes after he disappeared around behind the iceberg our heroes waited to hear the report of his gun.

But the crushing, grating sounds that came up from the slow-moving field of ice rendered it very doubtful if they could hear the shots.

As they were listening they heard two or three shots in rapid succession.

"Ah! He is after them now!" exclaimed the professor, who was regretting that he did not accompany Barney. "See how the seals are scrambling for the water! Ah! that's sport for you! There goes two more shots! Just see how they scatter!"

"Hi-hi-hi!" screamed Pomp, at the top of his voice, greatly excited. "Look at Barney! Golly, how he runs on de ice!"

Barney was seen running round from behind the iceberg at the top of his speed, making for the shore.

"By George!" exclaimed Frank, "Barney is in trouble, or has seen something else besides seals. Ah! it's a Polar bear after him!"

"Bear!" gasped Professor Grimm, turning ashen-hued in the face.

"Yes—he is chasing Barney. Come on, Pomp! If Barney should slip on the ice, the bear would get him!"

"Yes, sah!" returned Pomp, who never refused to go anywhere with the young inventor. He grasped his faithful weapon with a nervous energy, and rushed forward by the side of the young hero, leaving the professor trembling like an aspen on the snow.

Barney ran for dear life. The huge bear gained steadily on him. Twice he wheeled and fired at the monster, and then resumed his headlong flight.

"Hurry up, Pomp!" cried Frank, fearful that the bear would get the faithful Irishman under his paw.

"Yes, sah; I se er comin'," answered Pomp, keeping pretty close behind him.

On they dashed, both keeping their eyes on Barney and the bear. Suddenly Frank fell prone on the ice, and Pomp sprawled over him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BARNEY'S PERIL—"WE ARE LOST!"

As they both went down their guns fell out of their hands and went skimming along on the ice some distance.

Frank was not hurt, but Pomp got a thump on his hard head that made it ring. He saw a million stars by daylight, and the spot where he struck was white with cracked ice.

"De Lor' goshermighty!" he moaned, pressing a hand against his head. "I se done gone an' broke my head all ter pieces, suah!"

"Never mind your head!" cried Frank, scrambling to his feet and picking up his rifle.

"Come on, or it will be all up with Barney."

Rubbing his head ruefully, Pomp staggered to his feet and looked around for his rifle.

It had skimmed some forty feet away unperceived.

"Whar my gun?" he cried out, in loud tones. "You got dat gun, Marse Frank?"

"No. Come on, you fool!" returned Frank, not even stopping to look back.

"Whar my gun? Who took dat gun? Whar dat gun?" and the excited old darkey looked around in a bewildered sort of way.

In the meantime, Barney and the bear were coming toward him as fast as they could. Pomp saw them; and the thought that he would have to face the monster without any weapon utterly demoralized him.

"Ugh! whar dat gun?" he cried again, looking wildly around.

"Oh, for the love av God!" yelled Barney, as he came bounding over the ice, "shoot the baste. Shoot 'im! shoot 'im!"

The fierce beast gave a roar that made Pomp's wool stand up straight on his head.

"De Lor' sabe me!" gasped Pomp. "I ain't er gwine for ter stay heah. I se gwine back," and he put out for the shore as fast as his heels could carry him.

But not being used to running on the ice, Pomp soon fell, and then his fears got the best of him. He yelled like a lunatic, and scrambled to his feet with such terrible energy that he slipped and fell again ere he had gone fifty yards.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, as he came up to where Frank was waiting to get a shot at the bear.

"Stand your ground, Barney," said Frank, "and give him a bullet."

"Be the powers!" said Barney, panting for breath, "it's ground I'm after. The oice won't hold me."

"Oh, give him another shot," and Frank raised his rifle and fired at the bear, scarcely thirty yards away.

The bullet struck the monster on the head, and caused him to halt and rub it with his immense paws.

Crack! went another shot, and he gave evidence of being hard hit, for he growled and rose on his haunches.

"Now let him have one in his throat!" cried Frank, again taking aim at the fair target thus presented to him.

One, two, three, four more shots were fired in rapid succession, and one of the bullets entered the bear's brain through his right eye.

Then he uttered a frightful roar, and fell over in a hollow space between two icy hillocks.

"That settled him," said Frank, running forward to get a nearer view of the monster.

"Bedad, an' it's meself as thought he had me settled in his stomach," said Barney, drawing a long breath of relief.

He followed Frank up to where the bear was giving his last gasps, and stood there gazing at him like one in a dream.

In the meantime, Pomp and the professor had made good speed back to the ship. The darkey tried to borrow the professor's gun, but he would not let him have it. He did not know how soon he would need it himself, he said, and so they both returned to the ship.

But Pomp was not the man to stay there when Frank and Barney were engaged in a battle with an enemy. He seized another gun, and sprang overboard with it, leaving the ship in charge of the professor, and hastened with all speed to the beach.

But ere he reached the ice again the bear was dead. A bullet in the brain had settled him, and he was now harmless.

He came up to where Frank and Barney were looking at the dead monster.

"Pomp," said Frank, eying him sternly, "you are a coward!"

"So he is, the blaggard!" put in Barney.

The words had scarcely left the Irishman's lips when Pomp's head struck him just below his vest, and he went over, with all the wind knocked out of him.

"Hold up, there, Pomp! What do you mean, sir?" demanded Frank, turning angrily on the faithful fellow.

"Marse Frank," answered Pomp, "dat Irish-er had er gun when he runned erway from dat b'ar. I lost my gun on de ice, an' went back fo' anudder. He called me er coward, an' I don't star' dat from no Irish-er, nohow."

"Where did you lose your gun?"

"On de ice when I fell down," he replied.

"And you couldn't find it?"

"No sah."

Frank knew that Pomp was telling the truth. He never knew him to tell a lie seriously, and so he said:

"Well, we'll see if we can't find it for you."

By this time Barney had recovered his wind sufficiently to get upon his feet. There was blood in his eye, and Pomp saw it.

"Look out dar, Barney!" he said, shaking his head warningly and holding his rifle in a manner to get the drop on him if the Irishman attempted to shoot him.

"Keep quiet, both of you," said Frank, "or I'll take a hand in myself."

"The saints presarve us!" exclaimed Barney. "Is it an O'Shea that's to be butted loike a goat an' he not shtrike a blow?"

"You struck him when you called him a coward," said Frank, "and that is enough. Keep quiet now, or I'll leave you both here in this icy country."

Barney was prompt to obey orders, but he was too mad to see straight. He growled and grumbled for some time, but he dared not break out into open hostility by attacking Pomp. He made up his mind, though, that he would get square with him on that score if it took him a year to do it.

"I don't see that we want any more bear-meat than we already have," Frank remarked, as he again looked at the dead bear. "So we may as well go back to the ship and leave him here."

"Dat's er fac'," coincided Pomp. "We's got more'n we kin eat."

While they were talking the ice was grinding and breaking up all around them. At times the noise was almost deafening; they could not hear each other speak.

Suddenly a terrible crash startled them, and on looking around, they found that they had broken loose from the shore, and were being carried out to sea.

"My God!" gasped Frank, "we are lost if we can't get ashore!"

CHAPTER XXV.

ADRIPT ON THE ICE.

At the moment he made the discovery of his peril, our hero realized the full import of it. The great field of ice had broken in two, and the little party were being carried out to sea.

He looked to the right and left in search of some connection by means of which he could still reach that portion of the field next to the shore. But he looked in vain, and his gravest apprehensions seemed on the point of being realized.

It was an almost hopeless despair that forced from him the exclamation:

"My God! we are lost!"

Barney was not able to realize the extent of the danger that threatened them. He was a bold swimmer himself, and knew that Frank and Pomp were also. Why one should despair when only fifty or one hundred yards of water divided him from the shore he could not really understand.

"Sure, an' can't we swim?" he asked of Frank, as he looked over at the widening breach.

"Yes," said Frank, "we can swim easily enough, but *not in ice-water*. Five minutes in that water would so benumb every limb that one would sink and drown before he could reach the ice on the other side."

"De Lor' gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp, who instantly saw the truth in what Frank had just said. "We'se done gone, fo' suah!" and he groaned like one in mortal pain.

"This won't do, though!" cried Frank. "We must find some way to get ashore. To be carried out to sea is certain death."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, who turned and followed Frank up to the top of a mound of ice, and gazed in every direction in search of some icy connection with the mainland.

But they could not see any way of making the connection.

"I wonder if the professor can work the ship?" said Frank. "He has seen it handled enough to know how it is done. Oh, if he only knew, and would set it in motion to come to our rescue! I don't believe he understands anything about the propeller and rudder. We must get off some other way."

Pomp was shivering as though possessed by an ague. The fear of being left on the ice to freeze seemed to send a chill clank through him. Barney was equally demoralized, and both looked to the world-renowned young inventor to get them out of the peril that menaced them.

The island of ice on which they were floating was about a mile in circumference, and from the elevation from which our hero was taking a survey, he could see all round it. The upper end seemed to be swinging around, as if it would touch that part of the field that was still pressed against the shore.

Frank watched the movements of the slowly moving mass for some ten minutes or more, and then said:

"Let's go to the upper end. We may make a connection up there."

That put new life into Pomp and Barney, and they were away in a moment. On the way, Barney stumbled over the rifle Pomp had lost when he fell over Frank.

"Be the powers!" he exclaimed, "it's in luck

we are. There's friends about av we foind 'em!"

"Dat's my gun, Barney," said Pomp.

"Sure, an' is the oice yours, too?" Barney asked.

"That's his gun," said Frank; "he lost it when he fell."

"Bad luck to it, thin," and the Irishman kicked the weapon out of his way. He was still angry with Pomp for the terrific thump he had given him with his battering-ram.

Pomp grinned and picked up the gun, keeping an eye on Barney the while. He knew that Barney would not easily forget the whack he had received.

They pushed on over the rough surface of the field of ice toward the upper end, hoping to be able to make the connection.

"Hurry up!" cried Frank.

They rushed forward, and soon reached the point, only to find a gulf over 200 yards wide between them and the mainland.

Frank turned white as a sheet, and leaned heavily on his rifle as he stood and saw the gulf widening every moment.

"Sure an' I can swim it," said Barney, laying down his rifle.

"You would perish of cold, Barney," said Frank. "It is certain death to undertake it."

"Sure, an' won't we fraze av we stay here?"

"Yes; but we may have another chance or two."

"Look dar!" cried Pomp, pointing to a party of natives approaching the ship in sleds, away off to the right, more than a mile away.

Frank gazed at them in silence for a few minutes, and then said:

"Thank God, they have come! They can get us off of this ice. They are used to such things themselves, and know how to work it."

"Bedad, av they get us out av this I'll forgive 'em for bein' haythen blaggards," said Barney, looking wistfully in the direction of the half dozen dog-sleds rushing over the snow toward the ship.

"Dat's er fac'," assented Pomp. "Dey kingit us offen dis heah ice."

"They have no boats," put in Frank, "but maybe they can use the rubber boat of the air-ship, if the professor knows anything about it."

"Which he don't, the ould skip-out."

"None of that, Barney," said Frank, very sternly. "Professor Grimm is a very distinguished man of science. He never was out in the wild beast regions before in all his life. It is not fair to expect him to be as fearless as men who have been all over the world, like you and Pomp."

Barney made no reply, but kept his eyes on the Esquimaux and their dogs. He saw them drive up to the ship and stop. The professor seemed to receive them in a very friendly manner, and then point seaward to the men on the floating ice.

Our hero saw the natives turn and gaze in his direction.

Then he saw them make a break for the shore. They ran down to the beach, where the ice was like a wall of stone, and signaled to him, screeching at the top of their voices words he could not understand.

"By my soul!" he exclaimed, "I wish I could speak their language."

"Sure, an' don't they tell us to swim out?"

"No—or they would make some sign like a man swimming."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Dey doan' come in deyselfes. Dat water am too col', for er fac'."

The professor, on board the air-ship, seemed to be in the greatest distress. Frank could see him pacing the deck of the ship, wringing his hands as if in mortal agony of both mind and body.

In the meantime the breach kept on widening, till now nearly a mile of water rolled between them and the beach. Out still further in the sea floated immense icebergs. Two of them were not half a mile away, and they towered several hundred feet in the air.

"My God!" exclaimed Frank, as he gazed at the two mountains of ice. "If we get between them we will be crushed."

Then they turned from the land to watch this new danger. Slowly but surely they drifted toward them. The current was going in one direction and the wind in another, a condition that was bound to make a crash somewhere.

Two hours passed, and then the upper end of the field of ice struck against one of the huge crystal mountains. The crash was terrible. It was not sudden, for both moved slowly, but such immense bodies could not rebound lightly. They seemed to be trying to *outpush* each other, and the reports of breaking ice far exceeded that of a thousand muskets in battle. The air was filled with millions of pieces of ice, of every size and shape, some going a thousand feet upward and falling in a shower about our heroes.

Appalled by the grandeur of the scene, as well as by the certainty of the doom that was closing

in on them, our heroes stood close together, and looked every moment to be hurled into the air by the bursting ice.

Terrible as was the crash going on where the iceberg and the floating field came together, it was far exceeded when the other iceberg collided with it. The reports of the cracking ice were like those of cannon on a battle-field. Showers of broken ice flew in every direction. A large piece landed on Barney's head and ~~kn~~ him out as flat as a flounder.

Pomp knelt down by his side and asked:

"Is yer gone fo' good, Barney?"

Barney groaned, and placed his hand on his head.

Pomp expected his time to come every moment, and was as cool as though no danger threatened. It was the courage of despair.

Frank leaned on his rifle and gazed first at one iceberg and then at the other. The field was being ground up between them. It was evident to him that the iceberg on the south side was aground, and the other was moving against it.

After the grinding crash had been going on for some ten minutes—which time seemed like hours to our heroes, the field of ice suddenly parted.

The split ran north-east and south-west like a bolt of lightning, and that part next to the shore shoved away with the impetus of a ship being launched into the water the first time. Our heroes were nearly thrown off their feet by the sudden breaking off of a portion of the ice-field.

Barney was the first to regain his equilibrium. He saw that he was nearing the shore at a rapid rate.

"Whoop!" he yelled, "the Saints are good to the Irish! Glory to God, we're afther goin' back!"

And so they were.

The impetus of the concussion sent the huge field of ice back against the ice-bound shore, which it struck in less than ten minutes after the crash.

Frank stood ready to leap, and Barney and Pomp were at his heels to follow, the moment they reached the shore.

"Saved!" he exclaimed, as he sprang ashore, and all three clasped hands over the peril they had escaped.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NATIVES AGAIN.

THREE happier men than our heroes were when they felt the solid earth beneath their feet once more, were never known. Frank quietly pressed the hands of his two faithful followers, and uttered a fervent "Thank God" in a manner that demonstrated the source of it.

Tears came into Pomp's eyes as he returned the pressure of the young hero's hand, and said:

"Dat was er mighty close call, Marso Frank."

"Yes—the closest we ever had, old man," returned Frank. "I don't wish to see another one like it."

"Dat's er fac'."

Barney showed his joy at his escape in a different way. He uttered several wild whoops, and danced around like a lunatic, to the great delight of the natives, who understood the peril they had just escaped.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, dancing an Irish jig. "Out agin air free as air! Whoop! Come on, yez little haythens. Do yez moind that shtep now! That's the way we do it in ould Ireland! Bring on yer white bear! Bejabers its meself, Barney O'Shea, askin' the hides av all av thim. Whoop!"

"Hi dar, Barney!" cried Pomp, grinning from ear to ear. "Come up to de ship an' lemme git de ole banjo outen de chest. Golly, I make youse dance yer legs offen yer!" and the jubilant old darkey made a break for the ship at the top of his speed.

Between him and the ship was a small hill, up which he ran. Beyond that hill was a depression of some ten feet or more, filled even with the hill-tops with drifted snow. The impetuous darkey had no thought of the real position of the land, and so rushed through the snow, thinking it but a few inches deep. In he plunged, and the next moment was floundering about in nearly ten feet of loose snow.

"Ugh! De Lor' gorrarnighty!" he exclaimed, and in his confusion turned and followed the course of the depression, instead of returning or going straight across. "Dis heah am de wustest place in de worl'. De whole worl' am full ob snow, suah!"

The natives laughed and chuckled over the incident, and one of them went in and brought out his gun for him.

Pomp had the good sense to follow him out, and in a few minutes he was standing on the

frozen ground, and declaring that he wasn't cold in the least.

"Bedad," said Barney, "the snow is warmer this day, I'm thinking."

"Dat's er fac," Barney, said Pomp. "Dat snow am like blankets—de mo' youse hab de warmer you is, fo' er fac."

Barney placed his thumb against his nose, and gently wagged his hand at Pomp.

Pomp only grinned. Frank then led the way round on the left till they struck the foot of the hill on which the air-ship was resting.

The professor was on deck to receive them. He had been afraid to leave the ship, on account of the presence of the natives.

"Thank God you are back again!" the professor exclaimed, with tears in his eyes, as he grasped Frank's hand. "I feared you were doomed."

"So did I, but we got off all right at last."

"Yes, I hope never to see such a sight again. I couldn't make those natives understand anything, but the moment they saw you on the ice they seemed to realize your danger. They ran down to the shore, and appeared to be very anxious to do something for you."

"I thought so myself," returned Frank, looking around at the natives. "I wish I could make them understand how thankful I am for their good endeavors. Oh, I forgot that we left a dead bear on the ice!" and he looked back towards the shore and saw that the field of ice had lodged there. Springing overboard, he made signs for the natives to follow him.

They did so, for among them he recognized two who were with the party that carried away the skins and remnants of the four bears killed two days before.

Down on the beach Frank boldly went upon the ice, and beckoned them to follow him. Of course they were not afraid of the ice, and in a few minutes he led them to the half-frozen carcass of the dead bear.

Their shouts and exclamations of delight on seeing the prize were a source of pleasure to our hero. The Polar bear was one of the hardest animals in the world, and hence one of the most dangerous. With their rude, primitive weapons, it was a rare thing for the natives to kill one. When they did, it was an event long remembered in the little settlements along the coast.

Their first duty was to get the dead bear off the ice and on the land. They accordingly fastened strong cords, made of sinews, to the bear, and prepared to pull him along with them. Frank looked on, and wondered if they could move the big carcass in that way. To his surprise, when they pulled, the carcass moved right along, and in less than a half hour they had it safe on the land. Then came a jubilee.

They made merry over the prize, and gave demonstrations of their gratitude to the young stranger who had given them more food in the short time he had been on their coast than they had been able to procure in several months.

In their peculiar way they went to work to divest the carcass of the skin, and then they cut up the meat, and divided it for the different sleds up on the hill.

"That pays them well for their visit," remarked the professor, as he saw them packing the meat away in the sleds.

"Yes, and I am glad they came. They seem to be very grateful."

"They are. If we only had an interpreter, we might be able to get some information out of them."

"But we haven't, and so we will have to depend on signs and such for communication."

Just then two of the natives came up and began a minute examination of the heavy overcoat the professor had on. They did not seem to be interested so much in the style and cut of the garment as in the texture of the goods. They have no cloth of any kind. Every garment they wore was made of the skin of animals, and they were warmly clad from head to foot. It was plain to our hero that they were laboring under the impression that his clothes were made from the skins of animals also. But he was not able to undeceive them, and so they lost that much in not being able to communicate with them.

"They cannot live very far from here," said Frank, to the professor, "as three of them were here the other day when we gave them the four bears."

"Yes; I noticed them myself," the professor said. "They seemed to know me when they came up, and talked to the others as if telling them something they did not know before."

The natives stayed around the air-ship a long time—about two days, counting twenty-four hours to a day. Our heroes wondered what was keeping them about there. But the motive soon became apparent.

Two of their number had been sent out along

the coast in quest of something. One of these two was seen returning at the top of his speed. His companions ran to meet him, and the moment he began talking, the whole party became greatly excited. They turned to our hero and made all sorts of excited gestures, which he was at a loss to understand.

"An enemy of some kind has put in an appearance, maybe," suggested Professor Grimm.

"But there are no rival tribes in this region," returned Frank; "at least, I have never read of any."

"Neither have I. But here comes one with a bear's paw which he took from one of the sleds."

The native came up and showed the huge paw, which had been cut from the dead bear slain on the ice that day, and then with many words pointed in the direction whence the runner had come.

"Ah!" exclaimed Frank, "I understand them now. They mean to say that more bears have been found, and that they want us to go and kill them."

"I guess you are right," said the professor; "that must be what they are after. I must say, however, that I am not, for one, much in love with that kind of sport."

"Of course not. Some one must remain in charge of the ship, and I would rather have you do that than any other. Barney, Pomp!"

"Sah!" responded Pomp.

"Get the rifles ready for another bear-hunt."

"Dey is ready, sah!"

"Come on, then."

Frank took his faithful weapon and led the way. Barney and Pomp were close behind him, with the excited natives following, and chattering like so many magpies.

After going about two miles, sometimes wading through deep snow-drifts, and climbing hillocks of ice which had been cast up by the angry sea, they came in sight of two immense Polar bears prowling about in quest of seals or any other food that could be found.

The moment they caught sight of the bears, the natives set up a shout and became almost wild through excitement. The bears turned and looked at them, and then started toward them.

The Polar bear is the most courageous of all the bear family, and the most dangerous, because of his frequent long fasts, which keep him in the humor to attack any and everything that gives promise of a meal.

No wonder then the two bears turned and made for the party of men who were approaching them. They were the kings of the animal kingdom of the Arctic region. What had they to fear?

When within one hundred yards of the monsters, the natives held back and would go no nearer. Frank and his two brave companions went on, and when within fifty yards of the bears, they halted.

"Now let's give the biggest fellow three bullets in his head," Frank said. "Take good aim, and fire at the word. Then we'll give the other one a volley. Now! Let 'em have it—fire!"

Three shots rang out on the frosty air almost as one, followed by an angry roar from the wounded bear, and yells of terror from the natives.

The shots seemed to have frightened them as much as the bears, and they took to their heels and ran back nearly a half mile ere they stopped to note the progress of the fight.

The first volley stopped the progress of the bears. The wounded one had received a fatal dose of lead, but his tremendous tenacity of life enabled him to make himself feared. His mate stopped, as if puzzled to know what ailed the other. The next moment she received a similar dose, and knew how it was herself.

Both being wounded, they fell to tearing each other, and thus our heroes were enabled to go nearer and give them a final shot that settled them forever.

Then the natives, seeing that the monsters were dead, came running up, shouting and laughing in their joy over the rich prize that had fallen to them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

OUR HEROES FIND A SHIP IN THE ICE.

It was surprising to see how very quickly the natives divested the dead bears of their skins and cut up the carcasses. To them the skins were of far more value than the meat. They would last much longer than a life-time in that climate, while the meat would soon be consumed.

It was noticed that every part of the bears was stowed away on the sleds. Nothing was left behind. Even the claws were preserved and carried away. Everything was of use to them in that terrible climate.

When they returned to the ship with the prize

for which they came, they soon took leave of our heroes and went away, loaded down with the carcasses of three enormous Polar bears.

"That's all they came for," said our hero, "and when they come again they will be surprised at finding us gone. How much water have you on hand now, Pomp?"

"All the cans are full, sah," was the reply.

"Snow-water?"

"Yes, sah."

"Very well, then. Give us one more good meal, and then we'll be off."

"Gwine ter go home, Marse Frank?" Pomp asked, with an eagerness that somewhat surprised the young inventor.

"Not yet, Pomp. I want to go where the ice grows thicker than it does here."

Pomp groaned away down in his boots, and proceeded to prepare the meal. The bear-steaks were good, and very savory, and he cooked enough to last nearly a week.

The meal ended, Frank overhauled the machinery, and saw that everything was in perfect working order. He neglected nothing, as his own life and that of his friends depended upon the safe working of every joint in the electric machinery.

Everything being in readiness, the young inventor set the machinery in motion. The rotascopes began to revolve, and in a little while the air-ship began to ascend.

The wind was not blowing, and so the air-ship went up in an almost perpendicular direction, to a height of a half mile.

"Make direct for the north," said the professor, whose enthusiasm rose with the ascension.

"Yes, that's just what I am going to do. I intend to go as near the Pole as I can get."

"That's the idea. We may run a terrible risk, but we will settle the question now for all time, and our names will go down in history to the last generation."

"Yes, if we don't go down in the Polar Sea and never get out again."

The professor turned pale, and asked:

"Do you think there is any danger of that?"

"Danger! This is the dangerous region of all the world. Another snow-storm could weight us down as the other one did. We have no remedy for that except to go back and build another ship."

"You did not think of the snow, then, when you were building this one?"

"Oh, yes, I did. But the trouble is, I didn't know just what a real Arctic blizzard was. I never dreamed that it is what we found it to be."

"Nor did I. The human mind could not conceive such a wintry blast as that was. I hope never to see such another one. You are going out to sea again."

"Yes, I want to make a dash across this unknown sea in the hope that we may find land beyond. By going at full speed we may reach land in a day or two. I don't think land has ever been discovered in this direction. If we find it there, we may reach very near the Pole that way."

"I guess you are right," said the professor. "Do you notice what vast fields of floating ice are below us? Look out there."

Frank gazed in the direction indicated by the professor, and saw miles upon miles of solid ice, like islands in the sea. In several of them immense icebergs rose up like mountains. Some of them seemed to have clashed against each other and then were frozen together. It was thus the immense ice-fields were linked together by the frost king.

"What a grand spectacle!" exclaimed our hero, as he gazed down on the crystal mountains and watched their slow movements in the sea.

"Yes; it seems like a dream, but for the cold," remarked the professor, scanning the horizon with a spy-glass.

Suddenly an exclamation burst from his lips.

"My God, Mr. Reade!" he exclaimed. "Look out there at the lower end of that field of ice! I am sure I see the masts of a ship sticking out of it!"

Frank clutched the glass eagerly and gazed in the direction indicated. The others almost held their breath in suspense as he gazed.

"You are right," he said. "The ship has been nipped in the ice, and is frozen in hard and fast."

He handed the spy-glass back to the professor, and instantly turned the ship's course toward the lower end of the ice-field.

In a half hour they were almost directly over the ship, which was crushed on the ice and lying partly on its side. Frank touched the little crank, and the air-ship began to settle down. The ship touched on an even place, and our heroes sprang out on the ice, and Frank sang out:

"Ship ahoy!"

No response came from the wreck, and Frank

and his companions looked at each other with sad expressions on their faces.

"All lost!" said the Professor.

"Yes, all lost!" repeated Frank, as he made his way round the ship to the other side, where he could climb aboard with but little trouble.

He found everything locked in the ice, as by bands of steel. Ice was everywhere.

He went on board and made his way down into the cabin of the ship. There he found seven men frozen stiff.

"My God!" he gasped, as he stared at the poor fellows. "They starved and froze to death. Hello! Two are alive! Here—Barney, Pomp! Bring some brandy here!"

Barney ran to the air-ship and fetched a bottle of brandy.

"Pomp! make some soup at once! Come here, professor!"

The professor ran down into the cabin, and found two men giving signs of life as they lay on the floor.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

BACK FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH.

THE fact that two of the unfortunate sailors showed signs of life stirred up the sympathies of the four men of the air-ship. They took them up out of the hold—or, rather, the cabin—of the vessel, and bore them to the air-ship. There Pomp was busy making a pot of soup of condensed materials put up for the voyage. Frank knew that men in the last stages of starvation could not retain solid food on their stomachs; hence he was prompt to order soup made for them.

They were too weak almost to speak. Their eyes were glassy, and their wasted frames looked like human skeletons covered with human skins.

"Hyer's de soup," said Pomp, coming into the little cabin with a bowl of hot savory soup in his hands.

"Give me a spoon," said Frank.

He took the spoon, and gave one of the poor fellows a taste of the soup. Lord! how eagerly he swallowed it! Two more spoonfuls were given him. Then as many to the other one.

"One spoonful every five minutes," said Frank, shaking his head as they looked appealingly to him for more. "You are too weak to retain it. Be patient. You can kill yourselves in ten minutes by overeating."

It was plain that they did not understand him. They still looked at him with eager, hungry looks, and reached out for more soup.

At last one of them said something in a tongue our heroes did not understand.

"That sounds like Danish," remarked Professor Grimm.

"Please see what ship it is, professor," said Frank. "I dare not leave these fellows. They must have a spoonful of soup every five minutes until they are strong enough to take more."

The professor and Barney went out and hunted round the ship for some time. It had been nipped in the ice and lifted clear out of the water. The hull was crushed beyond all hope of repair, and the moment the ice would remove its grip from it it would go to the bottom.

In going around it, the professor managed to get the name, or a portion of it.

It was the *Copenhagen*, the same vessel they had hailed only a few hours before they were caught in the terrible snow-storm that weighted the air-ship down on an iceberg.

"Ah! I was unable to get that ship off my mind," said the professor, as he stood by and gazed on the wreck of the noble ship. "I was afraid it would meet with just such a fate as this. Thank God we are in time to save two of the crew."

The professor returned on board the air-ship, and told Frank that the ship was the *Copenhagen*.

"I feared as much," said Frank, as he administered another spoonful of the soup. "I doubt if either of these men can tell us anything about the wreck of the ship. Even if they could, they are too weak to do so now, at any rate."

"Yes, that's so. But what shall we do? It won't do to stay here, a hundred miles from land, on a field of floating ice."

"No, we will have to move on. But go and examine the ship. Get her log-book, if you can find it, and anything else which you may think will throw light on her voyage. Bring them on board, but remember that these two men will add considerably to our weight and expense, so you will have to be careful what you bring on board."

The professor and Barney went on board the ill-fated ship and made a thorough examination of the captain's chest. He found the log-book and other papers bearing upon the voyage, to-

gether with a few valuables and mementoes, which he knew would be highly prized in the scientific world. These he brought on board the air-ship and showed them to Frank.

"All right," said the young hero; "we will save these two fellows, and then we can get from them something of the terrible story of their voyage. They are so eager for the soup that Pomp has to watch them and keep them down by a show of force. They are as weak as kittens, but in a day or two they will gain much strength. Here, you take charge of them while I put the ship up in the air again."

The professor took the soup and spoon, and began to act as nurse to the two starving sailors. They seemed to know that what was being done for them was the best under the circumstances. They took the soup every five minutes, and gave grateful glances in return for it.

On being relieved from the duty of nursing the two sailors, our hero went at once to the engine of the air-ship and set it in motion. The rotascopes began to revolve, and in a couple of minutes they were rising majestically above the icebergs.

The scene as they went up was a grand one. Everywhere, as far as the human eye could reach, the sea was dotted with immense icebergs. Nothing of the animal or vegetable kingdom could be seen.

Frank boldly headed north, determined to reach the Pole, or else battle with the climate as no one had ever done before.

"Which way are we going?" the professor asked, when they had been going a couple of hours.

"Due north," was the reply.

"How do things look?"

"Decidedly cold."

"Any signs of bad weather?"

"Not at present."

"How fast are we going?"

"About twenty miles per hour, I think."

"Then a few days more will settle it."

"Yes, I think so. But, professor, don't you think the open Polar Sea a myth?" and the young inventor gave the man of science a keen searching glance as he spoke.

"I believe the sea is there," was the reply, "but do not think that any ship will ever succeed in making a passage through it. The ice will always remain master of this highway."

"Just what I think, too."

"But the world will never forgive us if we don't go forward, and find out all about it."

"Of course not. I am going through it, if I have to freeze on to an iceberg."

"De Lor' sabe us!" growled Pomp, who had overheard the conversation.

"What's the matter in there, Pomp?" Frank replied.

"Nuffin', sah."

"Oh, I thought you were sick."

"No, sah."

The young inventor winked at the professor, and said:

"The climate agrees with Pomp. We ought to have a summer residence here. I think it would do him good."

Pomp knew they were guying him, and so made no reply.

In the meantime, the two sailors were getting along splendidly. The professor and Frank rigidly adhered to the rule in giving them food at the rate of a spoonful of soup every five minutes till their stomachs were strong enough to retain and digest more. They begged so hard for more that it required all the firmness our hero was possessed of to resist their appeals. But he knew how dangerous it was to give way to them in that particular, and so held out against them.

It turned out that one of the sailors could speak German quite well. So could Frank and the professor; and as soon as they were strong enough to do much talking they told the story of the destruction of the ship.

"That terrible storm came," they said, "and in a few minutes one could not see the length of the ship. Neither could one stand the cold. The man at the wheel froze stiff, with his hands clutched to the handles. Oh, it was awful! We knew not which way we were going. Several times a man looked at the pilot and reported that he was at his post and holding the ship to her course. At last the captain sent a man to relieve him. He was found dead and stiff at his post. Then the men became horror-struck. Just a few minutes later the good ship was caught in the ice and crushed, as if she were no more than an egg-shell. Then we were lifted upon the ice, and there we lay till you found us."

"And it was lucky for you that we did," remarked Frank.

"Yes, we owe you our lives. But where are we now? I feel a strange motion that is not like a ship in the water."

"We are about a half mile up in the air above the Polar Sea," replied Frank.

The sailor, weak as he was, sprang to his feet and glared wildly around him. Pomp was standing near by, and caught him by the arm.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed, trembling from head to foot, "let me get off!"

"Where do you want to get off?" Frank coolly asked him. "On an iceberg?"

The sailor glared at him in silence for a minute or two, as if uncertain what answer to make. A smile on Frank's face reassured him.

"If we are safe you are also," said Frank. "So keep quiet, and let well enough alone."

"Yes, that's so," said the sailor, dropping back on his bed. "I am foolish. But I never thought I would live to sail through the air."

"Neither did any one else, till science made it possible," remarked Professor Grimm. "It is more safe than sailing through the water, at least in this part of the world."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW PERIL—THE ICE KING IN THE AIR.

THE two sailors at last settled down into the common-sense belief that the four men in the air-ship were of flesh and blood like themselves. They saw that the air-ship was an actual fact and not a dream, and that they were flying through the air without harm coming to them. What a shock their old sailor superstitions had received.

Two days later they were allowed to go about the ship and see how it worked. They looked out over the sea and the great fields of floating ice.

Then they asked how the ship would behave in a storm like the one that had wrecked the *Copenhagen*.

Frank related to them his experience of that particular storm, and it aroused all their fears.

What if another one should strike them?

"Then we will ride above it—go up five miles if necessary."

"Mine gracious!" they both exclaimed.

"What's the matter?"

"Mine gracious!" gasped both again.

"Well, what's the trouble?"

"We are lost!"

"I guess not."

"That's too high."

"Is it?"

"Yes—too high," they both repeated.

"Well, I'd as soon fall five miles as one. What's the difference?"

They looked sick.

Barney and Pomp saw from their countenances that something was troubling them. They didn't understand German, and so did not know what was being said.

But they saw from Frank's countenance that all was well. That was enough for them, and they began to laugh and joke, hoping to add to the uneasiness of the two sailors. Their conduct had a contrary effect, however. The two sailors saw that Barney and Pomp were not the men to laugh and make merry in the face of danger. Their fears were instantly relieved, and they began to chatter in Danish, and seemed to be perfectly contented with the situation.

"Look, heah, Barney," said Pomp. "Dey ain't skeered a bit, dey ain't."

"Bedad, but how can they be frightened when they don't be afther spakin' a worrur av the Quane's English?"

"Dat's de wustest talkin' I ever heerd in all my born days," remarked Pomp, after listening to their chatter for some time.

"That is it?" Barney asked.

"What?"

"That lingo."

"Don't ax me," said Pomp, shaking his head.

"Dat 'ar kinder talk 'ud break er nigger's jaw right off, suah, an' dat's er sollum fac'."

The two sailors seemed to be reconciled to the navigation of the air, though at times they would pinch themselves to make sure they were not dreaming.

But the intense cold soon drove them all into the cabin. Pomp seemed to suffer more than any of the others, though he was as warmly clad as they.

"Marse Frank," he said, "dis am mighty cold."

"Yes; but it isn't half as cold as we will yet see."

Pomp groaned.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Ise er gone nigger, Marse Frank."

"Why, what's the matter with you, Pomp?"

"I gibs it up, Marse Frank; Ise done mos' froze ter deth. I ain't er gwine ter lib no more. Wha' fer yer gwine fuder, Marse Frank?"

"Oh, look here, Pomp," laughed Frank. "If I can stand it you can. You'll have something to

talk about all your life when we reach the North Pole and get a piece of it."

"Bless yer heart, honey, you'll froze ter deth afore yer git dar;" and heshook his head mournfully as he spoke.

"I guess we can all stand a great deal more of cold before we freeze," remarked Frank, as he went out to take observations.

To his dismay he saw a whitish cloud rolling toward him from the eastward. He looked at it in fear and trembling for a minute or two, and saw that it was growing larger and approaching very fast.

He beckoned to the professor, and the man of science came to his side.

"Do you see that cloud?"

"Yes," the professor replied, as he looked in the direction indicated.

"What do you think of it?"

"I am afraid of it."

"So am I."

A silence of some minutes followed.

"What shall we do?" the professor finally asked.

"What can we do but outride it? I think we had better try to get above it, as we certainly cannot hope to outrun it."

The professor looked up, as if to measure the height of the cloud, and shook his head.

"I fear we could not live at such an altitude," he said.

"I'll risk it, anyhow. Don't let 'em know in there."

He went back to the crank that connected with the electric machinery of the ship and nearly doubled the number of revolutions of the rotascopes. The air-ship immediately began to ascend very rapidly.

Barney and Pomp, inside, never dreamed of what was going on. They were trying to get a little fun out of the two Danish sailors. The good-natured fellows laughed and jabbered with them, and seemed quite anxious to be on good terms with them.

Higher and higher the ship climbed, and by and by the whitish-looking cloud seemed to pass under them. At the same time a white mist enveloped the air-ship so completely as to shut out all view of the sea or icebergs below. A fierce wind began to blow, and the ship rocked fearfully.

Barney and Pomp looked as if they had been condemned to suffer a terrible death in a few hours. The two Danes turned pale, and one of them asked, in German, of Frank:

"Are we in danger?"

"Not much. We are scudding before the wind, and will be all right. Go to your beds, and stay there till I call you."

They were trained seamen, and knew how to obey orders. They went to their quarters and stayed there.

In the meantime, they were not so far above the sea as to be out of the sound of its angry waves. As the waves dashed against icebergs, and as icebergs crashed into each other, the roar was like a clash of worlds. It far surpassed the previous storm in volume, fierceness, and grandeur. Both Frank and the professor stood appalled, and watched its progress in silence.

"Which way are we going, Mr. Reade?" Professor Grimm finally asked.

"Westward—flying before the wind," was the reply.

"What is the altitude?"

"I don't know; wish I did. We must go up higher."

"Are we doing so?"

"That I can't tell. We will soon find out, though. This mist is as fine as smoke."

"Yes, and colder than anything I ever felt in all my life."

The air-ship was making a terrific speed through the air; but as the wind was with them, it did not seem so fast to those on board. They must have made fifty or sixty miles to the hour.

Frank looked anxiously in every direction, and made a thorough examination of the machinery of the ship, to see what effect the storm was having on it.

Everything seemed to be getting along smoothly, and the young inventor was congratulating himself on having had the foresight to mount up above the fury of the storm, when he made the discovery that the whole ship was being rapidly covered with a thick coat of ice.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as he turned to the professor, "we are in danger of being weighted down into the sea!"

"How? In heaven's name, how?" cried the excited professor.

"By the ice. Look at every wire and inch of wood-work. The ice is nearly an inch thick. We have two extra men on board, and so can't carry much ice."

"Here, Barney—Pomp—quick!"

The two faithful fellows sprang to his side.

"Look at that ice!" he cried. "It will bear us down into the sea if we do not get rid of it. Get the steel rods that belong to the harpoons and knock it off."

Barney and Pomp lost no time in obeying orders. They knew that to go down in that fearful storm would be the end of the expedition and all connected with it. The wires that held the rotascopes in position were now an inch thick with ice. A blow on one of them dislodged the ice and sent it in a shower on the deck. Barney promptly shoved it overboard. Every part of the ship that was exposed to the mist became covered with ice, and our heroes were kept busy knocking it off.

CHAPTER XXX.

CAUGHT IN AN ARCTIC WHIRLWIND.

THE intense cold kept them busy every moment. To stand still five minutes outside the cabin threatened death by freezing. They had to keep moving and battling with the ice.

"There must be a heavy weight of ice on the bottom," said the professor.

"Yes," returned Frank, "we can keep it off everywhere else but there."

"Is there no way of dislodging it from there?"

"I don't know. I will see," and our hero went inside and sat down, holding his head between his hands. He was doing hard, quick thinking. At last he sprang up and rushed out to Pomp's side.

"Give me that harpoon handle," he said.

Pomp handed it to him.

He placed it under his feet, and bent it to the desired curve, and then looked at it.

"Now screw on the spear," he said to Pomp. "The sharp point can reach under the ship and cut loose the ice."

"Dat's er fac'!" exclaimed Pomp, catching the idea promptly. "I se gwine ter go fo' dat ice, suah!"

He screwed on the head of the harpoon—the spear—and then braced himself to reach under the ship to detach the ice.

He succeeded in getting the sharp point under the ice, and an immense cake, as large as half the surface of the bottom of the ship, fell off and splashed into the sea more than two miles below.

"Ah! That was well done!" exclaimed Frank. "Now try the other side."

Pomp went over to the other side, and began work there. In a minute or two he broke the ice loose, and the ship, relieved of the incubus that was weighting it down, rose higher and higher in the air.

By and by they felt great trouble in breathing. Try as hard as they would, they did not seem to get air enough. They gasped and panted like men who had overexerted themselves. Two of them began to bleed at the nose and show signs of great demoralization.

"What's de matter wid me?" Pomp asked, with a puzzled look on his honest black face.

"We are up too high," said the professor, turning to Frank.

"Yes; we'll get down a mile or so," and the young hero touched the crank of the electric engine. The number of revolutions of the rotascopes was reduced, and the air-ship began to descend toward the sea again.

But the terrific storm continued. The roar of the sea as it dashed against the icebergs was awful to those that heard it.

"Don't go too far down," suggested Professor Grimm, looking uneasily out of the window of the little cabin. "It would be certain death to get caught in the fierce embrace of that storm."

"It would, indeed," returned Frank. "To strike an iceberg would shiver us to pieces."

As soon as they could breathe comfortably our hero increased the number of revolutions of the rotascopes, and held the ship to about the same altitude.

But the formation of ice on every part of the ship that was exposed to the white mist continued, and our heroes had to watch and prevent being weighted down by too much of it. Thus they were descending at one time and ascending at another.

The storm continued two days, and then began to subside. But the fierce wind, howling like a demon, still carried the ship westward. The angry sea roared and splashed over immense icebergs, and every once in a while two mountains of ice would clash together with a crash that could have been heard ten miles away on a clear day.

"I think we outrode the storm," remarked Frank, as he noticed signs of weakening on the part of the elements.

"Heaven knows I hope so," said the profes-

sor. "But it was a terrible peril to pass through."

"It was indeed. But it is not over yet, though I think its backbone is broken."

"Which way are we going?"

"Westward."

"You don't know how fast we have been going?"

"No; impossible to say."

"We must have made very great speed with the wind at our back."

"Yes. We are still over the sea, though, as we can hear the waves below."

"And the ice grinding together."

"Yes. What sailing-ship or steamer could weather through such a storm as this in these waters?"

"None. The world does not hope to use these waters for trade or travel. Knowledge is all that is wanted in regard to the Pole. The world wants the mystery that surrounds it unraveled, and will never be satisfied till it is done."

"I guess you are right. For the sake of those who would otherwise be sent in search of the knowledge, I hope we may find out enough to satisfy the world and settle all disputed questions."

"Ah, so do I. It should be made a crime in all civilized countries to even suggest a voyage to these waters."

"Yes, but they will come till the question is solved."

"So they will—but—ah!—"

The professor's remarks were cut short by a suddenly movement of the ship that sent him and his stool sprawling on the floor of the cabin. Such a thing had never occurred before.

The ship was caught in a whirlwind.

It was spinning around at a fearful rate. All on board had to lie down on the floor and close their eyes to prevent dizziness.

"My God!" groaned the professor.

"De good Lor' sabe us!" prayed Pomp.

Barney called upon all the saints to interfere and save them. The two Danish sailors, who had been in many storms at sea, remained quiet and resigned where they had been all the time.

They believed that the time had come when death would claim them, and had made up their minds to submit to the inevitable without making any fuss about it.

Several times Frank tried to get upon his feet and do something to get the ship out of the whirlwind. But as often as he tried it he was hurled against the wall of the cabin.

"Heaven help us!" he gasped. "This is a peril I never counted on! What shall I do? I fear the ship will be wrenched so badly as to disable her. Then we will go down in a crash!"

Suddenly he felt the ship make a plunge, as if going down end foremost.

Barney and Pomp yelled in terror.

"We're er-fallin'!" cried Pomp.

Frank scrambled to his feet and looked out.

One of the rotascopes had ceased to revolve.

He sprang to the crank and made the discovery that the connection had been wrenched apart by the terrible strain. In a moment he had it in place again, and the rotascopes resumed its work.

The ship righted, and then it was known that it had slipped out of the whirlwind and begun its descent toward the sea.

But no sooner was it out of the whirlwind than the ice again seized upon it. It formed so fast that it carried them down—down toward the sea in spite of all they could do. The roar of the angry waves came up to them like the fierce growls of hungry tigers ready to rend their prey.

Fiercer, louder dashed the waves over icebergs; louder and more deafening came the crash of ice against ice, and nearer and nearer went the air-ship, as if doomed to go down never to rise again.

They got down into the white clouds of flying snow, where one could not see three feet in front of him. Frank turned the full force of the electric engines on the rotascopes, hoping to rise again. But all in vain.

The ship struck with a dull thud, and then careened on her side.

CHAPTER XXXI.

BURIED UNDER THE SNOW.

THE moment the ship struck Frank had the presence of mind to stop the engines, lest the wind should catch under the outspread leaves of the rotascopes and inflict damage.

The ship careened, and lay on her side, while the wind whistled furiously over her. Barney and Pomp were thrown in a heap on top of Professor Grimm, and the two Danes, more used to decks that presented inclined planes as they mounted waves, kept their feet and tried to hold on to whatever promised assistance. As for

Frank, he fully believed that everything was lost. He cared less for his own life than for that of others. He, too, slipped and went down in the heap that held Professor Grimm at the bottom.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned the professor, as he tried to dislodge them, "please get off of me!"

"Bedad!" groaned Barney, "it's sorry I am, but yez are all I have to rest on."

"De good Lor' sabe us!" prayed Pomp, promptly relieving the professor of the weight of his body. "I didn't go fo' ter do it, nohow! De Lor' sabe us!"

The professor managed to pull himself together again and get upon his feet.

To his very great surprise, the ship lay still on her side, shaken now and then by the fierce gusts of wind. He caught hold of the wire rigging to have some chance in case the ship was dashed to pieces by the waves. But they never felt the waves, though they could hear them dashing furiously over icebergs all around them.

Suddenly one of the Danes uttered a shout of joy in German, which both Frank and Professor Grimm understood.

"What is it?" Frank asked, a faint hope that all was not yet lost beginning to well up in his soul.

"We are on land," was the reply. "We are safe from the sea."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. The ship does not feel the force of the waves—only the wind."

That was enough.

A fervent "Thank God!" burst from both the professor and Frank at the same moment. Barney and Pomp heard the ejaculations, which were in English, and both turned to the young inventor to know why they felt thankful under such circumstances.

"We are on land," said Frank.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, his Irish impulsiveness cropping out in the reaction of his emotions. Pomp laughed in his joy, a broad grin illuminating his black face, and ejaculated:

"Dat's er' fac', bress de Lor'."

The professor reached out and grasped Pomp's hand in a hearty shake, saying:

"Amen!"

Then Frank grasped Barney's hand and shook it, and there was a general hand-shaking all round.

One of the sailors then explained that while they could hear the roar of the waves, they could not feel the least jarring. Had they fallen on floating ice, every wave that struck it would have jarred it, though it were miles in extent.

"You are right," said Frank. "But I would not have thought of that. I think we had better try to right the ship before we get fastened as she is. The snow will cover us, but we can stand that if we can get her on her bottom again."

They all muffled up in their Arctic coats and went out to try to right the ship. The wind was blowing a gale, and the fine snow drifted in such quantity as to render it impossible for one to see another ten feet away.

"All out on this side!" cried Frank, leading the way.

They followed him, and in another moment were up to their waists in snow.

"Now take hold and push her up—all at once!"

It was not a hard thing for six men to do, and in a couple of minutes the air-ship was in a good position to mount in the air again as soon as the wind would permit.

The rotascopes being closed, they presented but little surface to the wind, hence there was nothing to prevent the ship from remaining in that shape.

"All aboard!" cried Frank, and they all scrambled back on board, chilled to their marrow-bones by the cutting wind. They lost no time in getting into the warm cabin, where they were not only protected from the wind, but had the benefit of the electric heat.

"We shall have to stay here till this storm is over," said our hero to Professor Grimm, after they had all shaken the snow off their clothes.

"Yes, of course. We can't travel in such weather as this."

"It begins to look as though we couldn't go any further north," suggested Frank.

"How so?"

"Our present experience, for one reason," was the reply, "and I think that one enough, in all conscience."

"I think so, too. How long do you think we shall have to stay here?"

"That's more than I can tell. I want to wait for sunshine, so I can get our bearing. I don't know whether we have been driven one or two thousand miles by this storm."

"That's so. I wonder if we have struck an island or the mainland?"

"The mainland! What mainland lay in the direction that wind drove us?"

"Why, Siberia, of course."

"Good Lord! Why, Siberia is over two thousand miles west of where we were when it struck us!"

"Yes—but that is the only mainland in that direction that we have any knowledge of."

"True. We must be on an island in the Arctic Ocean, as I don't think we have come so far west as to strike Siberia."

"Well, we will see when we can get the sunshine again, if we ever do. Have we got provisions enough to last a month?"

"Yes, and longer too," said Frank. "But if we have to stay here any length of time, we must look out for seals or bears. One bear would last us two or three weeks."

"Yes, and be good eating, too."

"Of course."

They sat around and talked whilst the Arctic storm raged without. The roar of the angry sea was heard continuously, but they made up their minds to be contented, and so began to amuse themselves as best they could under the circumstances.

Cards and dominoes served to while away the tediousness of the time. Frank and the professor tried their hands at chess; Pomp and Barney played cards, while the two Danes amused themselves with a little game that was familiar to them.

The storm must have lasted a week, as it was fully that length of time in tapering down so our heroes could come out of the air-ship.

Then they had to dig their way out of the snow. It was between ten and fifteen feet deep, and so fine as to be packed almost hard as cheese.

"De Lor' sabe us!" ejaculated Pomp, as soon as he felt of the dense character of the snow. "Dis heah snow is done gone an' packed hard as er rock, suah! We ain't nebber gwine fo' ter git outen heah."

"Oh, we can dig out, I guess," said Frank, feeling the snow with his hand as he opened the door of the cabin; "and the sooner we get at it the better."

"Dat's er fac'," returned Pomp, who never contradicted his young master in anything; "but it's harder 'n the airth ter dig."

"Oh, no. The earth is frozen as hard as stone. This snow can be cut out in chunks. Go to work, all hands."

They all got the implements that had been improvised for the work, and pitched in. At first they did not know what to do with the snow at the door of the cabin, as they had nowhere to put it. Digging *upwards* is very different from digging *downwards* in that respect, as they soon found out.

But the fertile brain of Frank Reade, Jr., again came to the rescue, and Pomp was set to melting the snow, to add to their supply of fresh water. That solved the problem, and the work of excavation went on.

Hours passed ere they succeeded in getting the snow out of the way so they could get up on top of it. It was packed so hard that they did not sink more than eight or ten inches when on top.

"Yes; it's an island!" exclaimed Frank, as he glanced around; "and not a very large one at that. We are not one hundred yards from the sea. It was a narrow escape."

"Indeed it was," said the professor. "But tell me. How do you know that we are on an island?"

"Look around—straight across there several miles away—and you can see the icebergs floating with the tide."

The professor did look, and in another minute he agreed that they were on an island in the Arctic Ocean. Everywhere they could see immense icebergs and fields of floating ice. Only the island, which appeared to be about three or four miles across, seemed to be stationary. If there were any uneven parts about it they were concealed beneath the tremendous depth of snow.

The young inventor got his spy-glass and scanned the horizon in every direction in search of something to break the dull monotony of the scene. It was the same everywhere—snow, ice and water. No sign of vegetable or animal life could be seen.

"We shall have to draw on our supplies as long as we remain here," he said, "as I don't see that any animal life could be sustained on this little island."

"We may not have to stay here but a few days," suggested Professor Grimm.

"True; but we will have to wait for sunshine before we can take our bearing."

"Yes, and we may have that at any time, now that the storm is over."

"Well, we will hope so, anyhow," and then they all went down into the cabin again in order to keep warm.

The balance of the day was spent in removing

the snow from all around the air-ship, in order that she might not get stuck fast. That done, they rested from their labors.

CHAPTER XXXII.

POMP'S ISLAND—DRIVEN BEFORE THE WIND.

Two days passed—counting twenty-four hours as a day—and still the sun was not seen. It had been hanging on the edge of the horizon for more than a month, making a complete circle every twenty-four hours, without once dipping below the sea. The intense cold had rendered life a bore, as our heroes on board the air-ship had no room for exercise.

"If I could only get out and take some vigorous exercise," remarked the professor, "I would feel much better than I do. As it is, we are down here in a hole in the snow where we can't move around much."

"But being below the surface this way makes it much warmer," suggested Frank.

"I don't feel the warmth," dryly returned the professor.

"You don't appreciate the situation," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly.

"I fear that I do not."

"Well, we'll wait a little while for the sun, say a couple of days more, and if we don't get a glimpse of it, we will go on without it."

"I think that would be the best thing to do."

"I am not sure of that," returned Frank. "It may be that we have discovered an island heretofore unknown to the world. If we have, we ought to get its latitude and longitude for the geographers."

"Mr. Reade," exclaimed the professor, "I came along with you as a scientific man, but you have more of it in your mental make-up than I have. Of course, we must settle the question as to whether or not we have made any new discovery. If we have, we ought to have the credit of it. I am willing to wait here a month, if necessary."

"Oh, I hope we shall not have to wait so long as that."

"Dat's er fac'," put in Pomp. "I'se ready ter go home now, suah."

"Oh, we are going further north yet, Pomp," said Frank. "We want to see how the snow is made, and—"

"De Lor' sabe us!" gasped Pomp. "Marse Frank, I'se gwine ter done an' quit yer when I gits back home. I doan' go wid yer no mo'. Dat's er fac'."

"Don't be a fool, Pomp."

"No, sah, I ain't er fool. I done got enuff ob dis heah ice an' snow."

"Why, you'll be looking round for a cool place next summer down in Readestown," said Frank, laughing good-naturedly at him.

"Dat's er fac'. I'd redder look for er col' place down dar dan be freezin' ter deth up heah."

"Why, you haven't frozen yet, Pomp. What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

Pomp turned away and sought refuge in the kitchen, where he managed to keep warm and cook a meal that pleased all on board. But the idea of going still further north in the region of eternal snow and ice was extremely demoralizing to him.

At last the sun came out through a rift in the dull, leaden-gray clouds, and the professor and Frank made haste to get their bearing. Frank used the quadrant, while the professor put down the figures as he called them out.

To their utter astonishment they found themselves on an unknown island in the Arctic Ocean, several hundred miles north of the coast of Siberia. They looked on the map, and found no island down in that latitude and longitude. All was a dreary blank on the map.

"Yes," exclaimed the professor in exultant tones, "we are further north than any man has ever been before, and have added an island to the map of the world!"

"That's so," assented Frank. "You see it's well we waited for the sun to come out."

"Yes; and I am glad we did," and the two men shook hands over their good fortune. Pomp and Barney looked on and listened, wondering what in the world they were in such a good humor about.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Pomp, when he learned that they were rejoicing over the discovery of the island they were then on. "What's it good fo', anyhow? It's done gone an' froze up harder'n er rock. Yer can't raise chickens or water-millions on it," and he elevated his nose in disgust at the whole island. Indeed, he would have sneered at the North Pole itself as an insignificant affair, and unworthy of any notice.

"What shall we call it?" the professor asked, turning to Frank in his enthusiastic exuberance. "We must give it a name by which it will be known for all time."

"Call it Grimm's Island," suggested the young hero.

"Never!" cried the man of science. "It's Reade's Island. How could it ever have been found but for Frank Reade, Jr.'s, world-wide invention?"

"Call it Pomp's Island, then."

"I doan' want it. Gib it ter Barney," said Pomp, in disgust.

Frank and the professor roared with merriment, and Pomp wondered what in the world amused them so much.

"That's such a good joke," said the professor, "that I think we had better call it 'Pomp's Island.'"

"I doan' want it," said Pomp. "Wouldn't hab no ilun like dis heah."

"Yes," said Frank. "Pomp's Island it is."

Pomp shook his head, and went back into the kitchen, where he busied himself with his duties, repeating his assertion that he didn't want the island, and "wouldn't hab it nohow."

The two moving spirits of the expedition were in such good humor over the success of the voyage, so far, that they resolved to make another desperate effort to reach the Pole. They reasoned that it could not be much worse at the Pole than it was for a radius of a thousand miles around it.

"If we can reach it and solve the question of an open Polar Sea," said Frank, "we will have done more than all the other navigators of the world combined."

"Yes. I would be willing to perish here in this snow if the world knew of our success, for eternal fame would be ours."

"Well, I am not so ambitious as that," returned Frank. "I am not willing to die to secure a name in history."

"You have secured it already by your inventions. It is different with me."

Frank was amazed at finding the quiet man of science so ambitious. He had not dreamed that he was such an enthusiast.

They named the island, and then prepared to resume their journey toward the Pole. Pomp was told to prepare plenty of rations, ready cooked, so he could give his entire time to the ship in case of emergency.

Everything being in readiness, Frank, who had previously examined every part of the airship and machinery, set the rotascopes in motion. They worked beautifully, and in a little while the ship ascended from her deep hole in the snow, and rose high above Pomp's Island.

The view was the same as before the storm struck them—ice and icebergs everywhere. The little island they had just left was the only land in sight. The land there was not visible, but they knew that it was there beneath the snow.

"How strange that we should have dropped down there," said the professor, as he looked down at the little island in the midst of an illimitable expanse of water.

"Yes," said Frank. "I thought of that many times."

"If anything was ever providential, I think that was."

"So do I. It could not have been mere luck or chance."

"Of course not. No man can ever have luck in such a region as this."

Frank was scanning the horizon with a spy-glass, and, after a long silence, said:

"The same everywhere—water and ice, and the ice increasing all the time. It's a mystery to me that all the water does not freeze up in the course of time. Take that mountain of ice out there. It must be several hundred feet high, and several thousand feet down in the water. What's to hinder it from growing until it fills the ocean here?"

"For the very simple reason that the current carries them southward, where the warmer air and water reduce them to water again."

"Ah! Nature has a remedy for everything. If they were to stay here all the time, the Arctic Ocean would, in time, become solid ice."

"Yes. All the machinery of Nature works in perfect harmony. Are we heading north now?"

"Yes. I am going to take the risk. Nothing venture nothing have."

"It's dangerous, but I am willing to risk it."

"So am I."

The airship ascended high up above the sea, and the clear sky gave promise of good weather for the voyage. But a sudden breeze struck them—a fierce wind, and they faced it for four days, making the best headway they could.

"Why, hello!" exclaimed Professor Grimm, on the fourth day. "Here's land in our rear!"

Frank turned his spy-glass in that direction, and said:

"Yes, it's land, undoubtedly, but under deep snow."

"Everything is under snow."

"Yes. Let's take our bearing, and see what island it is."

They did take observations, and when Frank figured it up he was amazed.

"Why, we are several hundred miles south of Pomp's Island!" he exclaimed, looking at the professor.

"Oh, you have made some mistake in your figures," the professor said.

"Maybe I have. I'll go over them again."

He went over the figures again, and came out as before.

"I can't understand it," remarked the professor, in a dazed sort of way.

"I think I do," returned Frank. "The wind has blown us back. The clear sky deceived us. At any rate, here we are on the coast of Siberia, several hundred miles farther south than we were four or five days ago."

"Yes, that's certain; but how strange it is we didn't know we were going backwards all the time."

"We didn't notice it. There being no clouds or snow, our suspicions were not aroused. It can't be helped now. We will have to drop down there somewhere, and wait till the wind blows the other way."

"Yes, that's the only way," said the professor, and the airship began to sail along the coast in quest of a good landing.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE FOOT-RACE AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

The coast presented but a dreary prospect. Everywhere the surface of the country was covered with snow, and it began to look as though they could find no place to land except in a bed of deep snow. Suddenly Pomp caught sight of a spot where the wind had blown the snow away from the ground.

"That's the coldest spot we could find," said Frank, "but it's the best place to land, after all. We'll go down there and see what will turn up for us."

The ship was headed in that direction, and in ten minutes or so they were settled down on the dry, hard, frozen ground not one hundred yards from the sea.

They all leaped out and ran around the ship a dozen times, whooping and yelling, for the exercise it afforded them.

Barney challenged Pomp to a foot-race along the brow of the hill as far as the surface was clear of snow, and Pomp promptly accepted it. He would never let Barney back him out of anything.

Both were good runners, and in a minute or two they were making for a point a quarter of a mile away, going at the top of their speed. Barney, however, being younger than Pomp, forged ahead, and made the goal ahead of him.

When they started to return, they were almost paralyzed at seeing an enormous Polar bear in their pathway—half-way between them and the ship. He had evidently come out from his lair somewhere in the vicinity to see what so much running meant.

"De Lor' gorrarnighty!" gasped Pomp, on seeing the intruder.

"Power av Moses!" exclaimed Barney.

Neither of them had a gun.

The sea was on one side of them, and on the other side was deep snow, in which the bear could travel much faster than they.

What could they do?

Frank and the professor saw their danger and hastened on board to arm themselves.

The bear started toward them.

"Barney!" cried Pomp, "he's er comin' after us, suah!"

"Bad cess ter 'im! Phat shall we do wid the baste?"

"Less run'm, an' when we gits mos' dar you run roun' on dat side, an' I run roun' on de udder, an' den we hoof it home. Dem b'ars aint' good on er run nohow."

"Bedad, an' yez are roight," said Barney, who was by no means a coward. He and Pomp had been in even tighter places together, and saved themselves by courage and dash.

With a whoop and a yell they dashed away towards the bear at full speed, keeping side by side, as if they intended to charge on Bruin and give him battle.

The bear saw them coming, of course, and must have been astonished, for in that region he is king. No other beast dare oppose him. Seeing two rushing toward him, Bruin halts, gazes at them to make sure he is not dreaming, and then rises on his hind feet, and prepares to receive them with open arms.

On rush Barney and Pomp, yelling and shouting to keep up their courage as well as to intimidate the enemy.

Bruin growls and makes ready for the onset.

Just as he thinks he is about to clasp one in his arms and down the other with a blow from one of his great paws, the two men divide and rush past him on either side.

Ere he recovers from his astonishment, they are fifty yards away, going at full speed toward the ship.

With an angry growl, the great beast gets down on his four feet again and starts off in a shambling gait in pursuit of them.

"Hi dar, Marse Frank!" yelled Pomp, as he went bounding back toward the ship. "Shoot 'im! Shoot 'im quick!"

"Kill ther baste!" cried Barney, almost out of breath. "Bad cess to 'im!"

Frank ran forward to meet them, and cried out to both:

"Get your guns, quick!"

The professor had armed himself also, but was not running very fast to meet the bear, when Pomp came up and said:

"Gimme dat gun, massa!"

"Here, you are a better shot than I am, Pomp!" and he surrendered the gun with very great promptness to the faithful black. Then he made good speed back to the ship to get another gun.

In the meantime the bear, angered at having been fooled out of his prey, came on, growling, and made straight for the young inventor, who stood waiting for him. When the beast was within thirty yards of him, he fired. The ball struck him on the head, but at such an angle as to glance off, making an ugly scalp wound.

The concussion staggered him for a minute or two, and he stopped, shook his head, roared fiercely, and passed one of his paws over his head, as if to wipe off a hornet or something that had stung him.

Then he came on again.

Crack! went another shot, and the bullet nearly tore off an ear, and lodged deep in his left shoulder.

Maddened by the pain, a fierce roar burst from the huge beast, and he shoved forward as if determined to crush his foe at all hazards.

Crack! went a third shot, and again a bullet glanced off his hard skull. But this time it so dazed him that he rose on his haunches and fought the air with his huge paws, which were now covered with blood.

As he stood up thus, our hero aimed directly at his throat and fired again.

The bullet struck true to the mark and broke his neck.

A frightful roar escaped him as he rolled over on the hard, frozen ground. Over and over he rolled, rising to his feet at times and trying to walk; but his head hung helpless, and down he would go again, a stream of crimson gore pouring from his mouth.

"That finished him," said Frank, just as Pomp ran up and wanted to give him a parting shot.

"Dat's er fac'," returned Pomp, as he stopped and watched the dying struggles of the beast.

"He is the largest one I ever saw," said Frank, as he approached the victim of his marksmanship.

"Yes, sah, he is, suah," assented Pomp, "an' he gib me de biggest skeer I eber hab, too."

"You were pretty badly scared, I guess."

"Yes, sah—dat's er fac'. But dat ain't nuffin'.

He done gone an' got de wust ob it."

"You are right. It is better to get scared than killed, eh?"

"Yes, sah, fo' er fac'."

They both then waited for the last kick, by which time the entire crew were on hand ready to take off the skin and cut up the meat for use.

"I am glad we met him," Frank said, "as we can save our stores by eating the meat. He will last us a month, at the least. By the Lord Harry! here comes another one—his mate, probably! Look out, all of you!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

BARNEY'S PERIL AND NARROW ESCAPE.

ANOTHER bear had put in an appearance, and an enormous one he was.

The smell of fresh blood had made him very savage, if indeed he was not always so. He came toward them as if severe hunger were driving him, for he growled fiercely, and showed his terrible fangs to the men who were gathered around the dead one.

"Steady, now," said Frank, as Barney and Pomp leveled their rifles at the approaching monster. "Take good aim, or he'll give us trouble."

Crack! went both rifles, and the bear dropped right in his tracks as if every fiber and muscle in his big body had been paralyzed.

"That was well done, boys," said Frank, de

"The sudden ending of this new danger. I gave it to him in just the right spot."

"Bedad, an' it's mesilf as give 'im the pill that kilt him," said Barney.

"Dat was me dat laid 'im out, Barney," returned Pomp. "I let 'im hab it in de eye."

"Sure, an' that was me mark."

"Dat was mine, too, honey," said Pomp, with a great deal of firmness, "an' dis chile doan' frow no bullets away like a Irishier."

"I guess you both will have to claim it," remarked Frank, "for I don't think either one can claim more than the other."

"Be the Powers!" exclaimed Barney, becoming very much excited over the matter, "I'll find me bullet, an' show yez who kilt him!" and he strode away toward the bear, which seemed to have fallen an easy victim to the invaders of his Arctic domain.

The bear was lying still as a dead one. Barney walked up to where he lay, and kicked him with his right foot.

With a roar, he sprang to his feet, and made for the dumfounded Irishman.

"Howly Moses!" gasped Barney, making a desperate effort to get out of the reach of the beast. The bear reached for him with his right paw, which was as large as an ordinary pig ham. The claws were as long as a man's fingers, and as sharp as needles. They caught in the seat of his pants and tore them away, lacerating the flesh for an inch or two. Barney yelled in terror, and made a break for the others, with the enraged monster close at his heels.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Frank, the moment he saw the bear rise up, "he was only fanned, after all! Quick, Pomp! he will kill Barney!"

Both he and Pomp leveled their rifles at the beast. But Barney, rushing forward, kept in the way of their aim, preventing them from firing as soon as they otherwise would have done.

As for Barney, he had no time to stop and fire; to even wheel round would bring the brute on him. He could only run, and run he did with all his might.

"Oh, for the love av Heaven!" he cried, as he sprang away toward the others, "kill the bloody baste! Och! shoot 'im!"

Just as he dashed by Frank and Pomp, the two raised their rifles and fired. The bear was so near them that the powder burnt his face. But the bullets crashed through his head, and he went down a second time, never to rise again.

Barney never let up in his run for life, however, till he reached the air-ship. There he scrambled on board, and nearly paralyzed Professor Grimm with his terrified yells of—"Shoot him! Kill the baste!"

"That settled him!" said Frank to Pomp, as he saw the bear go down the second time. He knew that in such close quarters the bullets from the repeating-rifles would make sure work.

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'," returned Pomp. "But he like ter hab settled Barney, suah."

"Yes, Barney was in a tight place that time. I think the bear cut him with his claws."

"Dat's er fac'. I see 'im reach fo' 'im, an' Barney lit out faster'n eber he did."

"Well, run up to the ship and see if he is hurt. I'll stay here and see if any more bears show up."

Pomp returned to the ship, and found Barney in deep distress. He was bleeding very freely from a painful wound on his hip.

"Dat b'ar hurt yer, Barney?" Pomp asked of the Irishman.

"Bedad, I'm kilt entoirely," was the mournful reply. "Would yer look at the blood?"

"De Lor' sabe yer, Barney!" exclaimed Pomp, as the Irishman turned his back toward him, in order to show the damage he had sustained.

"Dat b'ar done cut yer in two."

"Bad cess to ye for a liar!" growled Barney. "Sure the baste give me a scratch, but Barney O'Shea is alive yet, bedad!" and with that he walked away, as though he considered the wound a mere trifle.

"You are badly hurt," Professor Grimm remarked, "and your wound ought to be attended to at once. Pomp, run and tell Mr. Reade to come here."

Pomp, who knew the wound was not only not dangerous, but trifling in comparison to what it might have been, turned and walked back to where Frank was standing guard over the two dead bears, and reported to him about Barney's hurt.

"I am sorry," said Frank, "but it might have been worse. He made a very narrow escape."

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'."

"I'll go up and see him. You had better take the skins off and secure the meat. We don't know how long we will have to remain here."

"Yes, sah;" and the faithful fellow went to work to do his duty.

The two Danes, seeing what he was doing, went to work to aid him. He was surprised to see how much they knew about skinning a bear. They seemed to understand every motion he made to them, and were thus enabled to render him good service.

In the meantime, Frank had returned to the ship and examined Barney's hurts.

"He came near getting you, Barney," he said to the faithful fellow.

"Yis, sor—ther baste," returned Barney. "Sure an' he wasn't dead whin he said he was."

"Well, no, I shouldn't say he was dead. I think your bullet stunned him so that he was unconscious till he felt your kick. Then he sprang up and went for you. Did he hurt you much?"

"Sure an' it's mesilf as doesn't know, sor."

"Well, from what Pomp said, I thought you were badly hurt. Let me see the wound."

An examination revealed a cut made by the sharp claws of the bear a couple of inches in length. It bled quite freely, and was no doubt very painful, but not at all serious. Frank saw the nature of it at once.

"It is not very serious, Barney," he said, "but will be very sore for some time. You will have to stand up to eat your meals for a couple of weeks, that's all."

"Bedad, thin, it's mesilf that's willing ter stand oop an' ate the baste. Sure, an' I'll ate all av him I can."

"Out of revenge, eh?" laughed our hero.

"Yis, sor. The revinge will taste swater than the mate, I'm thinkin'."

"I can't blame you for thinking so."

"Nor do I," remarked Professor Grimm, who was standing by. "I really thought the brute would kill him right before our eyes."

"He would if Barney had not been very spry. They are as dangerous and as ferocious as Bengal tigers. I am glad we met them, though sorry Barney is hurt. We have plenty of good meat now, which will last us a long time."

"Yes, we are fortunate in that respect. But how long will we remain here?"

"Indeed, I am unable to say. I am quite upset by the backset we have received. We have been set back several hundred miles from Pomp's Island."

"Yes, so we have; but we had all that to expect in this latitude, you know."

"Yes, but it is not encouraging, to say the least."

"No. I would prefer to go on as we started. But we can try it over, you know."

"Just what we will have to do. But I want to take time and see that the ship is in a condition to withstand another storm like the last one."

"God knows, I hope we will not have to encounter another one like that," said the professor, shaking his head. "The bare thought makes me shudder."

"I don't want to meet one," replied Frank, "but we can hardly expect to avoid it. I want to remain here long enough to see how often they occur. If an intermission of a week or ten days intervene, we can easily reach the pole, and return before that time."

"Ah! That is a good idea!" the professor exclaimed. "I never thought of that. We had better stay here till another storm comes, and keep an account of the time, and then start out immediately afterwards."

"Yes, that's my idea exactly. So we will wait here and make ourselves as comfortable as we can. We can have no trouble about that, as we have the ship in a safe place and plenty to eat."

"Barney may be able to get well during our stay here," suggested the professor.

"Yes; much faster than if we were on the voyage," returned Frank.

Pomp and the Danes skinned and cut up the two bears in a very workman-like manner, and brought all the meat up to the ship, where it was stored and properly prepared for use. As to the skins, they were too heavy to be carried in the ship, unless cured in such a way as to reduce them to a very light weight. The Danes took charge of them and undertook to cure them.

But they found that it could not well be done out in the open air, as they soon froze and became as stiff as solid timber.

"Keep them till some natives come along," said Frank to them in German, "and sell them. You may be able to get something for them."

The skins were left stretched out on the snow, and nothing more was done to them. There they lay, frozen hard as ice itself, and our heroes took no more interest in them.

They had nothing to do now but to make themselves as comfortable as they could under the circumstances.

In the meantime, Frank and the professor busied themselves in taking observations. They

made notes of every change of the weather, and calculated as to the nature and course of the storms.

"The last one blew us south," Professor Grimm said, "and packed the coast for miles with a mass of icebergs. I think that is one of Nature's ways of expelling the ice from the Polar Sea. We may have to face it again; but if we make Pomp's Island a depot of supplies, we may be able to make a run from there, when the wind is favorable, that will take us through."

CHAPTER XXXV.

PLANNING FOR ANOTHER ATTEMPT.

PROFESSOR GRIMM'S suggestion struck Frank as being a good one. He sat silent for several minutes when he heard it, puffing clouds of smoke from his pipe, thinking about it.

"I think you are more than half right, professor," he finally said, blowing a wreath of smoke in the air. "At Pomp's Island we would be several hundred miles nearer the Pole than we now are. If we have our supplies there, we will gain that much time when we start out again."

"Yes; we will have that much the advantage over the elements, if it is possible to obtain any advantage."

"Ah! I forgot!" exclaimed Frank, as an idea struck him. "We would have to make several trips to the island, or else leave some of our number behind."

"Why so?"

"Because the Danes have added nearly 300 pounds to our weight, and to add our fresh meat to that would render the traveling very dangerous."

"That is so. But can't we divide, and one-half remain behind to—"

"No—no," said Frank, very promptly. "That would not do. Another storm might come, and they would perish, or natives or bears might attack them; or we might be blown away in another direction, and never see them again. Oh, no, that would never do," and he shook his head in a very positive way.

"You are right. We will have to give up the idea altogether."

"Of course we will. We must stay here till after the next storm, or till the wind blows northward."

"Yes. You are right. I don't see any other way of working it."

"Nor do I. How long before we have supper, Pomp?"

"In er half hour, sah," was the reply of black Pomp, "ef the whole worl' don't go an' froz' up. Dis yeah am er mighty col' country, Marse Frank," and he shook his head as if in serious doubt as to the world much longer being able to withstand the grip of the old frost king.

"Yes, but we have seen it colder than this, Pomp," remarked Frank.

"No, sah! I nebber did!" was Pomp's emphatic reply.

"Oh, you are mistaken, I guess," said Frank, smiling, and winking at the professor.

"No, sah; nebber seed sich col' wedder in all my born days, sah," and he was more emphatic than ever.

"Why, how you talk, Pomp! You astonish me! You were colder when that eagle lifted you out of the ship and went screaming toward the earth with you—were you not? Tell the truth now, once in your life."

"Yes, sah, dat's er fac'," replied Pomp, as the memory of that terrible experience caused him to shiver. "I felt mighty col' den, for er fac', but de ice wasn't dere. It wasn't dat ar kinder col'," and he shook his head again.

"Well, maybe it wasn't," said Frank, laughing, "but you were cold, all the same. There were iceicles on your eyebrows when we went down after you."

"De Lor' sabe us!" exclaimed Pomp, rolling up his eyes till nothing but the whites of them could be seen. "Dat one is big enuff ter melt all dem icebergs, Marse Frank."

Frank and the professor roared with laughter, and Pomp returned to his cooking.

"He is very willing to return and leave the world still in ignorance as to the North Pole," remarked Professor Grimm.

"Yes. His ambition cools at sight of an iceberg," and they laughed over the matter till Pomp announced that supper was ready.

The fresh bear-steaks and coffee were delicious. The savory odor of their cooking had given all of them splendid appetites. Barney forgot all about his wound in his eagerness to get a bite of the steak, and sat down on the stool that was placed for him by Pomp. The next moment he sprang up with a howl that startled every one on board.

"What's the matter?" Frank demanded, gazing wonderingly at the Irishman.

Barney was pressing both hands on the tender spot, and a look of pain came into his face.

"Be the powers!" he exclaimed, "the baste av a bear shtruck me again."

"You had better stand up when facing him, then," suggested our hero.

"Or run erway," put in Pomp.

"The baste is dead," said Barney, turning on Pomp. "If we had another cook it's dead you'd be this minute."

"Yah—yah—yah!" laughed Pomp, who had no fear of the Irishman before his eyes.

Barney was about to rush on him, when Frank said:

"Peace, now. Why can't you two get along without quarreling?"

"Faith an' Ould Nick couldn't be afther kapin' the pace wid a naygur," replied Barney.

"Dat's er fac'," retorted Barney's tease, grinning all round his black face. "De Ole Nick got no use fo' er nigger. He takes all de Irishers."

"Hi, there!" yelled Frank, "stop that now! If I hear another word from either I'll leave you here. Stand up to your bear, Barney, and leave Pomp alone."

Barney repressed his rage and turned to devour his steak, which he found really delicious. He did wreak his revenge on the bear, and every mouthful he took he thought better than the other.

The meal over, they all retired to rest and sleep, as the regular time had rolled round. One of the Danes was placed as watch while the others slept. The daylight still continued, the sun remaining just above the horizon, making the circuit every twenty-four hours.

They were to sleep eight hours and then begin another day. It was a night without its darkness, and our heroes had to regulate the days by the clock, and keep an account of them in a log-book.

While they were all sleeping on board ship, the Dane on watch rushed into Frank's quarters and called him up, saying in German that a bear was making straight for the ship.

Frank sprang up and gave the alarm.

Barney was too sore to get up. But Pomp and the others were soon up and armed for the fray.

When they went out on deck, rifles in hand, they saw an immense Polar bear approaching the air-ship. He appeared to be taking observations, for he came a little way and then stopped to sniff the air, as if to make sure there was something good to eat on board. Then he would go nearer, and stop again.

"Don't shoot till I give the word," said Frank; "I want to see what he is after."

They waited and watched.

The monster, for he was an enormous one of the species, came up to within ten feet of the ship, and stood upon his hind feet and growled menacingly at the five men who were standing there gazing at him.

"He may attack the ship," whispered Frank, to Pomp; "aim at his head and fire at the word."

Both raised their rifles and fired, and so close were they to him that the bullets crashed clear through his head, and he went rolling down the frozen hill-side in his death-agonies.

"That settled him," remarked the professor, who had so far overcome his timidity as to come out of the cabin to witness the fight.

"Yes," said Frank; "at such close quarters these rifles would send a bullet through much harder things than a Polar bear's head."

"I should say so. They are the best in the market, I guess."

"And you guess right. They are the best in the world."

"That bear would not dispute that point with you, surely," remarked the professor, as he watched the struggles of the monster.

"No, I guess not. He dies very hard. He was a dangerous customer to have call on us."

"Would he have attacked us?"

"Yes, I think he would. He was strong enough to have put one paw on the ship and turned it over."

"Indeed?"

"Yes. Why, didn't you know that?"

"I had given it no thought."

"Well, one of those fellows has a strength equal to ten-horse power, and their claws are like steel spikes. They can climb an iceberg just as easily as a squirrel can climb a tree, such is the sharpness and strength of their claws. With one square pull at a man, they can cut him all to pieces."

By the time the bear was dead, our hero had returned to his berth to finish his nap. The others did likewise, except the guard, who remained on duty till the morning was chimed out by the clock in the cabin.

After breakfast the third bear was skinned and

cut up by Pomp and the two Danes. Barney was so sore from his wound that he remained in bed all day.

"We have more meat on hand now," said Frank, "than we can eat in six months. I hope we won't have to kill any more bears."

"So do I," said Professor Grimm. "I have a horror of them."

"But we will have to shoot 'em if they come," put in Frank, "for they will attack us if we do not."

"Of course we will have to kill them, then."

"Yes, and save their meat as long as we can."

"Barney would like to hunt a few more of them before we return south," remarked the professor, loud enough for Barney to hear it.

"Bedad, thin, it's yerself I'd take for a bear," retorted Barney from his berth.

He was feeling sore over his wound, and was disposed to be quite savage in his replies.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ANOTHER PERIL—"WE ARE LOST!"

SEVERAL days passed after the killing of the third bear, and life was becoming monotonous to our heroes. The weather continued cold, and the wind blew with such force at times as to threaten to sweep away the air-ship from its position on the little hill.

It blew from the same direction all the time. The sky continued clear, and our hero considered it tantalizing that the sun should be in his favor while the wind was dead against him.

"We will have to wait till the wind changes, if it's a year," said Frank to the professor.

"Yes, we can't go against the wind, that's certain. Such a wind as this would blow us way down south again."

"Den let's go dar," sighed Pomp.

"Not yet awhile—not till we see how the icebergs are made," replied Frank; "we want to have something to talk about when we go home."

"De Lor' gorrainighty!" exclaimed Pomp; "if you'll go home now, Marse Frank, I won't say nuffin' at all about dese yeah icebergs."

"Why, you can't say much about 'em, Pomp; you haven't seen how they are made yet."

Pomp groaned way down in his boots.

He had no desire whatever to know more than he already did about the icebergs. He had enough of them. The wind kept driving them in against the ice that already lined the shore for miles, and the noise of the crushing and breaking was at times so deafening that they could hardly hear one another's voices.

At last the sky became overcast again, and the wind blew even stronger than they had ever seen it before.

"We are going to have another storm," the professor said, as he looked around.

"Yes," said Frank, "and this time I am not afraid of it. It may blow as hard as it pleases, and I shall not care."

"I wouldn't say that," said the professor, warningly. "You don't know just how hard the wind can blow in these latitudes."

"That's so. I take it back;" and the young inventor smiled as he spoke.

The wind increased in fury, and the air-ship fairly rocked where it rested on the frozen ground.

"If it blows much harder than this," said the professor, "we will be turned over and blown away ourselves."

"I think we can stand a little more yet," remarked Frank; "though I don't see how it can blow any harder. Here comes the snow—fine and white, like dust, and colder than snow ever was before."

They shut themselves up in the little cabin of the air-ship, and quietly let the storm spend its fury on the weary waste over which it was careering.

How the wind howled!

How the white snow flew and heaped up everywhere in that dreary region!

How the ice crashed on the shore, pressed by the wind from the sea, as iceberg after iceberg was driven in upon it!

The roar was deafening, and our heroes sat and listened to it till it became worse than monotonous. It became painful, and the longer it lasted the louder it roared and the more painful it became.

Two days passed, and still the storm continued.

Suddenly they felt something crash against the ship, and the ship was moved about twenty feet from her resting-place.

"What in the world can it be!" both Frank and the professor exclaimed in a breath, springing to their feet and glaring at each other.

"Somefin' is er-pushin' us erlong!" cried Pomp, his eyes almost popping out of his head.

Frank ran out into the blinding storm around to try and ascertain what had happened. He struck against something as hard as rock that loomed up over the ship.

He grasped it with both hands. A small piece broke off, and he knew that he held a piece of ice.

The truth flashed through his mind in an instant, and he staggered back into the cabin as white as the snow, and almost speechless.

"My God!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could recover his speech. "We are lost! An iceberg has been driven over on us!"

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CRAWLING ICE.

THERE are times in the life of almost every man when all the faculties of his mind may be paralyzed by the sudden advent of unlooked-for peril. So it was in the case of our heroes when Frank rushed into the cabin of the air-ship and said that the ice had been pushed up out of the sea, and that a huge iceberg was towering over them at that moment. They could not realize that what he said was even in the range of possibility. They glared at him and then at one another, and seemed to be unable to comprehend what he had said.

"Eh! what did you say?" Professor Grimm demanded, in a dazed sort of way.

"We are being crushed by the ice," said Frank, his face as white as a sheet.

"But we are on the land," said the professor.

"So we are, and the ice has come up out of the water after us," returned Frank, now partially regaining his self-possession.

"De Lor' sabs us!" groaned Pomp.

"The saints perserve us!" fervently exclaimed Barney, crossing himself a dozen times in as many seconds.

"The ice come up out of the sea!" the professor repeated. "How can that be?"

"Professor Grimm, the storm has driven so much ice in that it has been forced up on the shore, and it has reached the ship! Ah! it pushes it away! See how we are shoved along! We must get out of the way, or we will be crushed by a thousand tons of ice crashing down on us."

"Good Heaven!" groaned the terrified man of science, who was now beginning to understand the situation; "we must get away, then. Can we fly in such a storm as this?"

"No," said Frank; "it's impossible to rise in a gale like this. We must carry the ship on our shoulders, if possible. Come out here and let's see how the ice has caught us."

Our hero led the way out, and showed him, as well as he could in such a blinding storm of snow, how the ice had pushed up over the ship. He could not see six feet away, so fine and thick did the snow come down in a white cloud.

But now they were practically out of the wind. The ice was towering above them and had cut off the fierce blasts.

"Ah, the wind has stopped!" the professor exclaimed.

"No; you can hear it as it passes over us overhead!" cried Frank, at the top of his voice. "The snow is settling down on us. In a half-hour we will either be crushed under the ice or buried in the snow!"

The professor felt the ice, and saw that it was being pushed up on the hill.

"We must move," he said, and then they went back into the cabin to consult about it.

"What can we do?" the professor asked, the moment they were inside the cabin.

"We must lift the ship and slide her on the snow as far as we can. There is no other way."

They looked at each other, and thought how improbable it was that they could move the ship in that way. But our hero saw that he had no time to lose, and so he turned to Barney and Pomp, and said:

"Come, we must push the ship away from under the ice."

Then he spoke to the Danes in German, and told them what he wanted to do. They promptly followed him out, and stood ready to obey whatever order he saw proper to give.

Frank led the way overboard and round to the bow of the ship, and placed his shoulders under it to raise it up. The two Danes were quick to see what he wanted, and ran to his side. Their united strength lifted it and pushed it around, so as to give it a rest on the snow.

"Ah! That was well done!" cried our hero. "Now get behind her, and push as far as she will go!"

He ran round behind the ship. The snow was already up to his waist.

The others went with him. They placed their shoulders against the stern of the ship, and gave a hard push.

The ship moved forward till it got well on

the snow, and then it glided along with but half the motive power that was required to start it. The further it moved, the more hopeful our young hero was that he would finally escape the peril that had so unexpectedly threatened them.

"Shove her along!" cried Frank, as they pushed with all their might.

They did shove, and in a little while the ship reached the deep snow beyond the hill.

There they found that the great depth of the snow would stop them. They pushed with all their might, but failed to move the ship another inch.

"We are stuck!" exclaimed Frank to the professor.

"Yes, fast in the snow. How far have we moved it?"

"I don't know; we can't see the ice from here," and Frank climbed in, and called to the others to follow him. They did so, and in another minute they were in the warm cabin, shaking the snow from their garments.

"If the ice follow us here," said Frank, after he had taken a survey of the situation, "we cannot get away from it, for we can go no further."

"Can't we rise and fly a mile or two?" the professor asked.

"No, not in a storm like this. See how the snow drifts over the icebergs and lodges on us! Why, the ship has a ton of snow on her now. We can't rise under such a load as that."

"Then we will have to take the chances."

"Yes—we can do no other way."

"Well, maybe we have moved far enough out of the way."

"I hope we have, at least. But a few hours of such drift as this will bury us completely."

"Yes, but we will be able to stand that and keep warm."

"Of course. I don't mind the snow. It's the fact that crawls up from the sea that I most dread."

All on board the little ship were watching the storm. The snow fell so thick and fast that one could not see from stem to stern. It was bitterly cold, but warm enough inside the cabin.

Hours passed, and the ship was at last under the snow. Then they no longer heard the roaring of the storm nor the grinding noise of the moving ice. All was quiet. The air was a little close, but beyond that they did not experience much discomfort.

But when twenty-four hours had passed they began to feel the want of fresh air.

"We must make an opening," said Frank, "and see whether the storm has ceased."

"Yes, and get some fresh air," added the professor, whose face was flushed as if he had been drinking wine. It was the closeness of the air that flushed the faces of all.

It was a heavy task to dig out of that enormous snow-drift. The snow was heaped at least twenty feet above the ship's deck. Pomp was again forced to melt the snow that was dug away and put it in the water-casks. The work went on slowly, however, and many hours of hard work was necessary to enable them to reach the surface.

"Ah!" burst from every one as he caught a breath of fresh air.

The storm had ceased. So had the wind.

The sun was shining brightly from just above the horizon, and not a cloud could be seen in any direction.

"Thank God it is no worse!" exclaimed Frank, as he climbed out and looked around.

"Yes," said Professor Grimm, "you may well say that. Just look at the ice there! It is piled up so high as to shut out all view of the sea. Had it come fifty feet further, it would have crushed us."

"So it would. Had we not moved as we did, it would have been the end of our expedition. We have made some very narrow escapes in this region, but none so close as this."

"That's true, but a miss is as good as a mile."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp. "Ef we dcne gone an' beat de ice we's all right, sah."

"So we are," put in Barney. "Bedad, but the oice isn't up ter their game at all, at all."

"We are free from the ice," said Frank, "but not of the snow. We are at least twenty feet below the surface, and we must clear away enough of it to enable us to rise."

"Dat's er fac'," said Pomp, his teeth rattling with cold. "Better go home arter dis, Marse Frank."

"Why, you don't want to go home without the Pole, do you?" the young inventor asked.

"Yes, sah, I do," was the prompt reply. "I don't want no ole pole. It done gone an' froze hard as er rock. Taint nuffin' but ice, nohow."

"But we have come this far to find it, Pomp, and the world would laugh at us if we returned without it."

"Let um larf, Marse Frank," said the faithful, shaking his head sagely, "an' let 'em fin'

it too, ef dey kin. Dey can't do it, nohow, an' dat's de Lor's trufe, ef I do say it, fo' er fac'," and he prepared to settle down to his work at removing the snow out of the way of the ship.

Barney and the Danes pitched in to help him, and the work went bravely on.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BARNEY AND POMP—OFF AGAIN.

THE work was hard and laborious, but they were not the ones to be balked by such drawbacks. Every one in the party did his duty, and the snow was sent flying.

After a hard day's work the snow was removed sufficiently to admit of the air-ship rising out of the pit. Everything was put in readiness for the attempt, and then the rotascopes were put in motion. As they revolved, the current set going sent the loose snow flying.

At last the ship broke loose from the snow and butted against the white wall on the left, scooping out a huge slice, which fell on the deck and caused the whole thing to drop back again.

"Clear the deck, there!" cried our hero, and Barney and Pomp at once sprang forward to obey. The Danes assisted them, and in a few moments the deck was cleared of snow, and the ship began to rise again.

This time she rose up without any hindrance. When above the snow, it was no trouble to rise rapidly, although Frank observed that more power than ever before used was required to do it.

Then he remembered the heavy addition of bear's meat that had been made to the stores.

"Throw over some of that meat, Pomp," he ordered. "We have too much weight on board."

"How much, sah?"

"About 200 pounds."

"Yes, sah," and he proceeded to weigh out portions of the meat, in order to know how much would be reduced. Splendid bear-hams were weighed and tossed overboard.

"Pears like dat am foolishness," said Pomp, "ter frow 'way all dat good meat."

"Faith, an' it's a sin," said Barney, as he saw a ham go over.

"Give it to the natives," remarked Frank, smiling good-naturedly.

"Dat's er fac'," and Pomp stopped and glared at him. But when he saw the smile on his face he remarked:

"Dere ain't no natives 'cept de b'ars deyselves," and with that he sent another ham flying through the air.

The ship ascended higher and higher as the cargo was lightened. The scene below was not unlike what they had already witnessed several times before.

The whole earth was buried out of sight under the snow. The clear water of the sea was rolling heavily against mountains of ice which the waves had pushed far up on the shore. Ice was piled on ice, like rugged bowlders that had been cast up by some tremendous convulsion of nature. It was choked up for two or three miles out from the shore, such had been the force of the wind in driving it in that direction.

"It was a terrible storm," remarked the professor, shaking his head, as he gazed upon the scene.

"Yes," responded Frank, "and it demonstrates that no ship can live in this latitude where such storms prevail. Destruction is sure to come to every craft in these waters when nature asserts herself."

"Ah, you never uttered a greater truth!" returned the professor. "We can do the world great service, and perhaps save the lives of many good men, by our experience here."

"Of course we can; but we will not stop all this nonsense about finding the North Pole until we do find it and move it down south."

The professor laughed, and said:

"I don't know but what you are right. Maybe I would always have believed that some such contrivance as this could have solved the problem. At any rate, though I see the difficulties in the way, I am not willing to give it up yet."

"Nor am I. See, I am going to turn north, toward Pomp's Island again."

The ship veered round toward the north, and went off straight over the sea, which was still lashing itself against the crystal sides of the icebergs. The only breeze they felt was that which was raised by the speed of the ship. But the air was cold—colder than they had ever felt. The mercury in the thermometer out on the deck froze up solid. The one inside registered summer heat.

"I never felt such cold in my life," the professor remarked.

"Nor I," said Frank.

"Dat's er fac'," put in Pomp. "Dis heak ain't no place fo' niggers."

"It's right yez are," said Barney. "Naygurs don't loike their cowl."

"Irishers don't, neither," retorted Pomp.

"Faith, who said they did?"

Pomp stared at him as if for ten cents he would butt him overboard. He was mad because the ship was again heading north.

"Irishers doan' want ter git too smurty," he growled.

"Naygurs are not whoite, bejabbers."

"Niggers and Irish are foolish about this time of the year," remarked Frank, "so you two had better shut up, unless you can take a drink together and be friends."

"It's the drink we'll have, thin," said Barney, his mouth watering at the thought of some good brandy on such a day as that.

"Give him a quart of snow-water, Pomp," said Frank.

"Howly mither av Moses!" exclaimed Barney, in sheer disgust. "Av he does, it's a dead naygur he'll be!"

"Hi, hi, hi!" cried Pomp, "take yer water, Barney, an' doan' make no fuss erbout it."

"Would yez close that thrup av yours!" hissed Barney, mad as a hornet.

Pomp grinned and shook his woolly head at him. That set the Irishman wild. He made an effort to get at him, turning over a stool in the attempt.

"Look out, dar!" and Pomp lowered his battering-ram and prepared to make a plunge.

Barney stopped short in his charge.

He had come in contact with that head several times before, and knew but too well what it was capable of doing.

"Pomp, go to the kitchen! Barney, behave yourself, or I'll put you on duty out on deck till you freeze solid!"

Frank spoke sternly, and the two men knew that he was not in the humor to be trifled with. They quietly did as ordered, and that was the end of the quarrel.

In the meantime, the ship was making splendid time, going due north. Professor Grimm and our hero kept up a continual watch with the ship's spy-glass, to catch sight of anything that would add to the knowledge of that part of the world. In the distance some of the giant icebergs looked like islands; but as they approached them, the mistake would be manifest.

Pomp's Island was the objective point. They desired to reach that, and make a start from there.

"With such weather as this," said Frank to Professor Grimm, "we could reach the Pole in four days."

"So I think. I hope the weather will continue."

"So do I. That must be an island out there in our path."

Frank took a look at it.

"No, it's ice, but covered with snow, broken ice, and something else I can't make out."

"How do you know it is not an island?"

"By the many sharp points of broken ice."

"Ah! You are ahead of me again. That's a good way to judge," and the professor again gazed at the floating mass of snow and ice through the spy-glass.

The ship soon passed over the island of ice. They were all amazed at its immensity. It must have been ten miles long, by one or two wide.

"I think we could safely go into camp on that," said Frank, as he took it in from the height he occupied.

"The sea could never roll so high as to break it up or push it up on the shore."

"That may be so," remarked the professor, "but when the sea is angry I prefer to be on land."

"Dat's er fac', suah!" exclaimed Pomp. "Gimme de lan' eb'ery time, an' whar de sun shines wa'm."

Pomp never let a chance slip to remind the others that he longed to get back to a warmer climate.

Two days passed, and Pomp's Island came in sight again.

"There's your island, Pomp," said Frank, the moment he was sure of it.

"Doan' want it," replied Pomp. "'Taint my islan'. Ain't got no islan' up heah. Guess dat ain't nuffin' but ice, nohow."

The ship made direct for the island. It was covered all round with snow, affording no place for a landing. Round and round they went, looking for a spot where the wind had swept away the fleecy covering, but no such place could be found.

"Why stop there at all?" the professor asked.

"I wanted to do so," replied Frank, "and make a thorough examination of the ship before attempting the final trip."

"Do you think the ship needs an overhauling?"

"I can't say that I do; but I think it the part of wisdom to do it."

"You may be right. If we can't find such a place as you want on the island, why not seek for one on the ice somewhere? There are plenty of icebergs that the wind has swept clean."

"By George! that is an inspiration! I'll do that very thing!" and he swept the spy-glass round the horizon in search of what he wanted.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

STUCK TO THE ICE.

HE did not have to wait long ere he found such a spot as he was in search of. About a couple of miles away on the right was an enormous mass of ice, which held in its grip several great icebergs, and which seemed to promise a resting-place.

The ship was turned in that direction, and in a little while they were hovering over the floating field, in eager search for a smooth place on which to rest. Such a place was soon found, and the ship began to settle down.

When it struck the ice, Barney was the first one to jump out. The moment his feet touched the ice they shot from under him, and he went down like a man who had never seen ice before in all his life. He went skimming along nearly fifty feet, and made many ludicrous attempts to catch himself.

Frank and Professor Grimm roared with laughter, while Pomp sung out to him:

"Good-bye, Barney!"

He brought up against a bowlder of ice that blocked his way with a force that came near knocking all the wind out of him.

Putting himself together again, he looked around him with an expression of supreme disgust on his face.

"Bedad," he exclaimed, "whin I stop I don't stop, an' whin I go I stop too much, bad cess to it."

He was pretty well shaken up, but he was well used to that, and so started toward the ship again.

When about half-way up, the professor asked: "Is the walking good, Barney?"

"Yis, sorr—foine," was the reply.

"Then I will join you," and the man of science went overboard to take a walk on the ice. But he was destined to slide before he walked. His feet went from under him, and he struck amid-ship, as the sailors would say, and went skimming along as Barney had done.

"Hi, dar!" cried Pomp, as he saw the professor start off. "Look out, Barney!"

Barney stopped when he saw the professor coming like a boy coasting downhill, and tried to get out of the way.

He made a mistake.

Had he stood still he would have escaped a collision.

But he sprang to the right just as the professor rolled over in that direction, and the result was a meeting.

Barney was taken off his feet in a trice, and the two went flying along toward the bowlder against which the Irishman had brought up with such force.

"Howly Moses!" groaned Barney, as he found himself doomed to break the professor's fall by taking it all himself.

Crash!

The professor was on top of Barney, and escaped unhurt, save a good shaking up, which was as bad as the scare he received. But poor Barney was doubled up, and nearly broken in two.

"Oh!" he groaned, "it's kilt entirely I am."

"I am sorry," said the professor. "It was an accident, you know."

"Bad cess till ye, thin. Pwhat made yez lave the ship?"

"I wanted to join you."

"An' ye did," groaned Barney; "sure, an' it wur a bad jine for mesilf. Howly mither av Moses!"

Barney ceased groaning, and made a desperate effort to get away from the place. His eyes glared, and a terrible energy seemed to take sudden possession of him.

"Hi, dar!" yelled Pomp.

The professor glanced toward the ship and saw Pomp coming at full speed. Then he understood why Barney was in such a hurry to get away. He saw his danger, and tried to escape as Barney did, but failed.

Pomp struck him, and both went against the bowlder with a thud that knocked all the breath out of the man of science and made Pomp see more stars than had appeared to him since the affair with the eagle.

But Barney was avenged.

Pomp had served the professor just as the pro-

fessor had served him, and that made him as happy as a lark.

"Whoop!" he yelled. "The naygur has downed him! Be the powers, but it's mesilf as is glad av it, the ould baste!"

"Cheese that, Barney!" cried Frank from the ship. "He may be hurt."

"Faith, an' didn't he kill mesilf?"

"Not quite, but I will if you don't let up on that."

Barney knew just how far to go with Frank. Beyond a certain limit he never dared to venture.

Frank got out of the ship on the other side, but, before doing so, he put on a pair of spiked shoes, and then went to the assistance of the professor. He found him just returning to his senses. The collision had stunned him.

"How do you feel, professor?" he asked, trying to stand him on his feet.

"Eh! What?"

"How do you feel?"

The professor turned, and looked the young inventor full in the face for a minute or so.

"Are you hurt, professor?" he was asked again.

Then he recollected what had happened. But he was not sure whether he was dead or alive. He felt of himself, and shook his head.

"I am hurt," he said. "The black rascal has nearly killed me."

"The saints be praised!" said Barney, in an undertone, as he rubbed the back of his head. "His bird has come home to roost."

Pomp was not hurt other than a good shaking up. He rose to his feet, and looked quite foolish as he pulled himself together.

"Dat dere ice am slick as grease," he said.

"Dat's er fac'," remarked Barney, imitating Pomp's style as best he could.

Pomp was not in the humor for a fight. Neither was Barney, and so nothing more was said by either of them.

"Here, Pomp," called Frank, "help me carry the professor up to the ship."

"Yes, sah!" and the faithful darkey took hold of the groaning man and started toward the ship with him. Frank was on the other side of him, and the professor walked limpingly between them.

But when about half-way up, Pomp slipped and fell, dragging the professor down with him.

Frank's spiked shoes enabled him to keep his feet, but the other two went whizzing back down the icy incline again.

"Whoop!" yelled Barney, as he saw them collide with the ice-bowlder a second time. "It's the naygur this toime an' mesilf that's at aise wid 'im."

Pomp got the worst of it in that second fall, the professor being on top of him. Neither was much hurt, and both rose to their feet and stood staring around, as if in doubt as to how they would get back to the ship.

Just then one of the Danish sailors threw them a rope.

"Hold to that, professor!" cried Frank, "and pull yourself up to the ship."

The man of science seized it like a drowning man grasping at a straw, and began pulling himself up toward the ship. When he reached it he was lifted on board by the two Danes.

"I'll not go on the ice again," he said. "I am too old a man to go skating on icebergs."

Pomp and Barney wended their way back to the ship and climbed aboard. Both had bruises which they wanted to nurse and plaster.

"I don't think this is a very good place to land," said Frank, "but still it's better than dropping down in ten feet of snow."

"Maybe it is," said Professor Grimm, "but the walking is better in the snow."

"Yes, to those who can't walk on ice. I'll get through as quick as I can, and then be off."

With the assistance of the two Danes, he was soon at work overhauling the ship's machinery. He found many little things that needed attention, and he was more than glad that he had stopped to see to them.

Two days spent in the work more than repaid him for his trouble. He had the satisfaction of knowing that everything was in first-class order, and that he had nothing to fear from that quarter.

"Now we will make another start," he said. When the last little matter was attended to. "I think we are in a condition to strike the Pole now."

Then the rotascopes were set in motion. They revolved with tremendous rapidity, but the ship remained immovable.

"Good Heavens!" cried Frank, "we are stuck to the ice!"

CHAPTER XL.

THE PERILS OF WIND AND ICE.

THE exclamation that burst from the lips of our hero sent a thrill of terror through all on board the ship. To be caught in the ice was a danger that all Arctic explorers had dreaded above all things. It had haunted the young inventor in his dreams, and in his wakeful moments had been ever present to his mind. The ship was hard fast, as if it were part of the ice itself. To get it loose was not a matter of as much ease as digging out of the snow, and our hero was painfully aware of the fact.

"We are caught!" exclaimed the young inventor, after jumping out and making a hurried examination of the situation. "We must get loose as quick as we can. Get the axes, Pomp, and we'll get to work at once."

"Yes, sah," and Pomp hastened to comply with the command. Barney was ready to use one, as were both the Danes. They each took an ax and sprang out to cut away the flinty ice that held the ship in its grasp.

Two hours they worked like beavers, and still the ship remained fast.

"Another storm is coming," said the professor, as he looked away toward the north-east, where a thin white mist obscured the sky. That was the forerunner of a cloud of flying snow.

"Yes," replied Frank, gazing in that direction, "and it will catch us here, too, unless we are mighty lively. Hurry up."

"But what will you do if we get loose?" Professor Grimm asked.

"Mount up above it," was the very prompt reply.

"But the wind might serve us another trick."

"Yes; but that might not be as bad as to be caught here."

"I am not sure about that. This iceberg is large to be broken up by the heaviest seas might strike it. I believe I would rather try my chances on this field of ice than two or three miles up in the air."

Frank was amazed.

He glared at the professor as if he thought him out of his senses.

The man of science, however, stuck to his theory, and said:

"This iceberg is old. It has been a long time freezing, as big as it is. It passed through the big storm the other day. Why will it not pass through another one?"

"Great Heavens!" gasped Frank, as he glared at the professor. "Go right on board, professor," he said, "and bind a chunk of ice to your head. You will feel better soon. Hurry up, Pomp. Strike lively there, Barney."

The professor wondered why his logic was not considered good, and went on board to try to solve the problem.

In the meantime our hero, having more faith in being able to outride the storm, kept digging away at the ice. The flinty chips flew in every direction as the sharp axes cut into the ice.

"Be careful!" he cried to the others; "don't let your axes slip and cut into the ship."

Suddenly the ship keeled over on them.

"Bully!" cried Frank. "She is loose at last. All aboard, now!"

They scrambled aboard as fast as they could, and the rotascopes were started. Soon the ship straightened up as they pulled upwards.

"Up she goes!" cried Pomp, as the ship swung loose from the ice and began to rise.

"You are going to try it up in the air, are you?" the professor asked.

"Yes—rather than be tossed about on an iceberg."

"Well, you know best."

And then he lay down on his bed. The presence of extreme danger often made him feel as weak as a kitten.

The air-ship rose quickly after getting loose from the ice, and in a little while they were more than a mile above the surface of the sea.

In the meantime, the storm came along fast, and the fine snow-mist enveloped the ship.

The cold was intense, but the young inventor stood to his post, and guided the ship higher and higher.

But the storm-king was upon them ere they could get beyond his clutches. The wind suddenly struck them, and away they went before it.

Just how fast they were going they could not ascertain, but, to keep control of the ship, Frank had to run her before the wind, which, of course, added greatly to her speed.

"Which way are we going?" Professor Grimm asked, after a long silence.

"South-west," replied Frank.

"Good Heavens! We are going backwards!" the professor exclaimed.

"Yes, we can do no better."

"No, I suppose not."

"We will do well if we can go with the wind without being weighted down with snow and ice."

"Is there any danger of that?"

"Why, yes, of course there is. Since we added two more to our number it will not take very much snow to bear us down to the water."

"And that means the end of us all."

"Yes, that will be the end, if we go down."

The professor looked very serious. He was anxious above all things to succeed in the object of the expedition, and was even willing to take desperate chances. Yet he did not care to court death in such a reckless way as to make it sure. He remained in deep silence for several minutes, and glanced around at the faces of those about him, as if to read their thoughts. Their faces were as pale as his, and he derived no comfort from them.

"We must not let the snow weight us down, then," he said to Frank, after quite a pause.

"No, not if we can prevent it," and the young inventor glanced out on the deck at the white, fleecy snow that had already accumulated there.

Barney and Pomp knew the danger, and did not wait for orders. They seized brooms and swept away the snow. The Danes were equally as prompt, and rendered as good service as they.

"Can't we get above the source of this snow?" the professor asked.

"I don't know," said Frank. "We ought to be rising all the time. I can't tell just how we are going. It seems to me, though, that the snow is thinner than it was awhile ago."

"What does that indicate?"

"That we are either climbing out of it, or the storm is ceasing."

"I hope it is breaking up."

"So do I."

As they felt and talked for hours, without a change in either the wind or snow. As they were going with the wind, they did not feel free. But they were not so high but what they could hear the roar of the angry sea below, and broke over the icebergs and great fields of floating ice.

"We can't be very far from the water," the professor said, after listening to the familiar sound for some time.

"No, I don't think we are, but we are not depending any. I am quite sure of that."

"Then we are safe at the present?"

"Yes, at present. But what the next minute will bring we know not. Ah! We are either going down or the wind is rising!"

"How know you that?"

"By the way the ship acts. The wind is blowing stronger."

Frank hurriedly made an examination, and found that quite a quantity of snow had accumulated in various parts of the ship.

"Here! Quick, all of you!" he called. "Get that snow off there as quick as you can, or we'll go to the bottom of the ocean!"

"De Lor' sabs us!" groaned Pomp, laying about him with all his might.

Barney said not a word, but worked with all his might. He knew the danger was imminent, and did not care to talk. The Danes kept alongside Barney and Pomp, and did as they did.

Thus lightened, the ship rose up higher. The sounds from the angry sea below became fainter and fainter, and our hero breathed freer than he had for several hours. But they soon found that they could go too high. The air was not sufficient to sustain life at that altitude. They panted and gasped like men who could not get enough air.

"This is as bad as the sea," said the professor, turning to Frank.

"Very bad," returned Frank, "but we must hold it as long as we can."

"That won't do. We may hold out for several days, and then will come a sudden collapse that will sweep everything. It will be too late then, and we shall actually staggered like a drunken man as he falls."

Pomp and Barney were also in a bad way. They panted and gasped like men who were struggling.

"Marse Frank," said Pomp, "dis heah am my hard work."

"Hard work! Why you are not doing anything. What's the matter with you?"

"That's what I wants ter know, an' it's hard ter fin' out."

"That's the matter?"

"Doan' know. Can't git nuff breff ter sabs."

"Be the powers," said Barney, "it's the thruth, 'spakin', Pomp. Sure an' the breath isn't here."

The two Danes were also in distress, but they were used to rigid discipline on shipboard, and learned to endure every privation with-
out complaint.

The young inventor watched the scene with admiration, and waited

to see if they would make any complaint. But the brave fellows never uttered a word. They simply gasped for all the air they could get, and seemed to take it all as a matter that could not be avoided.

"Well," said Frank, "we'll drop down a mile or so, and see if we can get along any better."

Then he reduced the revolutions of the rotascopes, and the air-ship began to drop down into the white clouds of flying snow.

The roar of the angry sea became louder each moment, and they all found that they could breathe much more freely than a half-hour before.

CHAPTER XLI.

A FAILURE.

THEY all felt much better when they could breathe easier, and seemed to be willing to risk the dangers of the storm rather than the lack of air in a higher latitude.

The storm, however, was raging fiercely, and the wind sent the ship whirling at a tremendous speed through the air. At times it would be turned completely around; then again they were threatened with a capsize, so violent were the gusts of wind that struck them.

"Keep a strong grip," said Frank to all on board. "You don't know at what moment you may be turned over."

"How far above the earth are we?" Professor Grimm asked.

"I don't know. We can't see anything. We can hear the roar of the sea, though."

"Yes, so we can. It begins to look as if we could never reach the Pole by this route."

"So it does," and then the two friends were silent a long time. Each thought of the obstacles that had repeatedly come up to block success just as they were about to grasp it. Here they were now going away from the Pole at the rate of a mile a minute—for such they calculated was the rate of the wind at the time.

The terrible storm raged for two days. At times it almost subsided, and then again it would burst forth with renewed energy and sweep them along before it, as if determined to send them to the South Pole as quickly as time could take them.

Long before the end of the second day they passed beyond the sound of the sea. They could no longer hear it.

"We are no longer over the sea," said Frank.

"We have passed that danger."

"Bress de Lor," said Pomp. "Dis nigger ain't afear'd ob de snow. Let her drop, Marse Frank."

"Not much I won't," said the young hero.

"This wind would dash us to pieces against something."

"Keep her up, begob," put in Barney. "Sure, an' we're goin' ther roight way ter git home."

"Dat's er fac," cried Pomp, as he saw that they were going south. "Hope the wind'll blow er week dis way."

The wind continued to blow hard long after the snow had ceased to fall. They dared not attempt to land, as the wind would dash them mercilessly against the earth, and thus ruin the ship.

"Do you know where we are?" Professor Grimm asked of Frank.

"Yes," was the reply, "we are up in the air somewhere in Russian Siberia."

"So I supposed. But do you know our latitude?"

"No. I have not had time to take an observation."

"Can we take one to-day?"

"Yes, if the sun shines."

The professor looked up at the leaden skies and wondered in which direction the sun was hiding. Everywhere the same leaden hue met his gaze. No promise of sunshine was held out to him for some time. Not a break in the clouds could be seen in any direction.

"But the sun doesn't shine," he remarked.

"Oh, yes it does."

"Where?"

"Behind the clouds."

"Then let's go there and make out our bearing," suggested the professor, in a fit of desperation.

"De Lor' Gorrarnighty!" exclaimed Pomp, who had been listening to what was being said.

"Doan' you do dat, Marse Frank."

Frank smiled.

"No. I'll just keep ahead till the sun comes out."

"But we are going south."

"So we are."

"At the rate of nearly a mile a minute, before this wind."

"Yes."

The professor was provoked by his coolness. He was anxious. The young inventor seemed to be perfectly indifferent about everything.

Pomp was listening.

He was never so deeply interested in all his life before.

"Will you keep on before the wind?"

"Yes, of course. To attempt to land would be courting destruction. The destruction of the ship in this part of the world means death to all on board."

That silenced the man of science.

He knew that the young inventor was a man who weighed well his words before uttering them.

The wind blew a gale all that day, and after several hours another terrible snow-storm came on.

The ship had to mount up above it to avoid being weighted down with snow and ice.

"This is awful," said Frank, after a long silence.

"What is?" Professor Grimm asked.

"The whole situation. We have been on the wing a long time. The machinery of the ship is wearing badly by reason of the heavy loads we have been forced to carry. We are liable at any time to go tumbling down to death."

The professor turned deathly pale.

He was an enthusiast, but he was not the stuff of which martyrs were made. He did not care to die in the interest of science. Anything else but that.

"What shall we do?" he asked, after a long silence.

"We must try to reach the earth. But we can't do that while the storm rages. The force of the wind would dash us to pieces against the earth."

"Then how can we land?"

"We can't land at all while this wind blows."

The professor was anxious.

"How much longer do you think we can hold up this way?" he asked.

"Oh, I have no idea. We may be able to hold up a week or a month; then, again, we may not hold out a day. The machinery is wearing. The frequent gusts of winds give her many hard twists, you see, and there is no telling when she will collapse."

Again the professor was silent.

He glanced down at the sea of flying snow between the ship and old mother earth, and shook his head.

"Mr. Reade," he finally said, "I want to ask you a question."

"Well?"

"Will you answer it?"

"Yes, if I can."

"Very well. I merely want your opinion."

"You shall have it."

"What do you think of the expedition? Do you think we can reach the pole?"

"No, sir, I do not. The whole thing is a dead failure. The wind, ice, and snow reign supreme in the Arctic regions. We can never get over such obstacles, though we have gone further than any navigators ever yet reached."

"Then we must give it up?"

"Yes; I think so."

The professor turned pale, and staggered back against the side of the cabin. His dearest hopes were dashed to earth, and the one great ambition of his life blighted forever. The young inventor pitied him in his heart, and said:

"I think it can be said that we have been nearer to the pole than any other party that ever lived to return and tell the story."

"Yes, but we have failed," returned the professor, in hollow tones.

"Not altogether. Our explorations have developed information the world has long been in search of. It is my intention to construct another ship that will, in a measure, overcome the obstacles which have baffled us."

The professor's face brightened up on the instant.

"You will make another effort?" he asked.

"Yes, if I can succeed in building such a ship as will meet the exigencies of the case."

"Then I am content!" he exclaimed, reaching out and grasping the hand of the young inventor.

They shook hands heartily.

"Glory be ter de Lor'!" fervently exclaimed Pomp, who had been a silent listener to all that was said. "We am er-gwine home once moah, an' dat's er fac!"

"That's that, ye black nagur?" demanded Barney, running in on hearing Pomp's exclamation.

"We're er gwine home," answered Pomp.

Barney stared in amazement first at Frank and then at the professor. He knew that Frank

Reade had not been in the habit of giving up an object till he had attained it. The Pole had not

been reached, and he did not incline to the belief that he would go back till he had found it.

"Yes," said Frank, to his very great surprise, "we are going home, Barney."

"Whoop—hooray!" yelled the enthusiastic Irishman, dancing an old-fashion jig. "Let the ould Pole stay where it is! Who wants it, anyhow?"

"Hi, dar, Barney!" cried Pomp. "Lef megit de banjo, honey!"

"None of that now!" exclaimed Frank, in very emphatic tones. "We are not out of danger by any means. We'll have a dance when we get a landing, and not before."

"Dat's er fac," said Pomp, and in another moment both had quieted down, and peace reigned on board.

The two Danes seemed delighted when they heard that they were to be carried through to their homes in Copenhagen. Their bronzed faces lit up with a happy light when Frank told them about it.

So glad were all on board over the determination to abandon the expedition, that a great load was lifted off their minds, and they forgot, for the moment, the danger that menaced them. A sudden lurch of the ship soon reminded them, however, that they were yet at the mercy of the fierce elements.

Frank was uneasy about the condition of the ship. He was very anxious to have a chance to land and give her an overhauling, and he kept an eye open for an opportunity.

Two more days passed, and then he saw the earth covered with an unbroken sheet of snow many feet in depth. The wind had subsided. But oh, how cold it was! The air seemed to prick the skin like needles—so sharp and biting was it.

At last they saw a place where the fierce winds had swept the snow away. He resolved to land there.

The ship settled down gracefully, and our heroes sprang out on the hard frozen ground, as happy as children just out of school.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOME.

As soon as the ship was well settled and propped up, so the wind could not capsize her, our hero went to work looking after her machinery. He examined every part—every screw and joint—and took his time about it, too. A long journey was before him, and he wanted to make sure that everything was all right.

Two days were spent in the work, and every one lent a hand at it. They were all so glad that they were not going back north, that they had heart in everything they did.

Pomp cooked better meals than ever, and Barney ate double his allowance. The Danes were the only ones who were not excited over the situation. They took it all as a matter of course, and pursued the even tenor of their way.

When everything was ready they again rose in the air and started southward. A breeze sprang up that doubled their speed for more than twenty-four hours, during which time they made more than 1,000 miles. Everywhere they saw nothing but snow. Even the rivers were frozen up, and the ice lay many feet under the fleecy flakes.

At last they reached the part of the country where darkness followed day. They had to be on the lookout for accidents, and avoided them by keeping high up in the air.

On the third day they came in sight of a large village on the banks of a river.

The professor and Frank made up their minds to find out what place it was, and, if possible, let the people know that the famous expedition through the air was on the return.

The two Danes were questioned as to what they knew about the Russian language. It was ascertained that one of them could speak it fluently.

"Then we'll go down there and see what we can find out," said Frank, at once turning and steering the ship in the direction of the town.

"Look! The whole population turns out to receive us!"

"Yes, and they are frightened almost to death! See how they run back and forth! Some are down on their knees, others stand and gaze as if they were dumfounded."

"Dem folks am skeered e'enmost ter deth!" laughed Pomp.

"Faith an' they are," said Barney.

"They never heard of us, I guess," remarked the professor.

"Bedad, thin, it's scart they'll be whin we go down till thim."

As the air-ship descended lower and lower, the villagers took to their heels and sought refuge in their houses. The voyagers got out and looked around, as if anxious to see some one they could talk to.

At last a well-dressed man, wearing some kind of a uniform, approached them. He was evidently quite ill at ease, but something seemed to impel him to go forward.

Frank advanced toward him and extended his hand. The man went up to him and grasped his hand, and at the same time uttering something in the most outlandish tongue he had ever heard.

Beckoning to one of the Danes, he bade him see if he could act as interpreter.

The Dane did so, and, much to our hero's relief, found that he could understand the language.

Frank then spoke to the Dane in German, and told him what to tell the Russian who was the governor of the village, and thus the way was opened for negotiations.

The governor at once made proclamation to his people, telling them who the strangers were. The whole populace came trooping around the ship, and such a jabbering was never heard before. Barney declared them the worst-looking heathens he had ever seen in all his life.

Two days were spent there, and during that time everything good to eat which that bleak region could produce, was given to our heroes. They found the people warm-hearted and generous toward strangers. At the end of the two days they again rose in the air and went southward.

We cannot relate all their adventures while in the great Russian empire. It would fill a large volume. Everywhere they went they were received with the wildest enthusiasm. When they reached a point where telegraph wires touched, the news of their coming was sent flashing throughout Europe. The wildest excitement imaginable resulted. They were invited to the great cities everywhere. Kings and queens wanted to see the famous inventor and his air-ship. His name was on everybody's lips, and everybody wanted to see him and hear him.

Thus they went on toward Denmark, the native country of the two sailors. The news had been telegraphed that they were coming, and all Copenhagen turned out to receive them.

The two sailors were heroes. Their countrymen honored them as no sailors were ever honored before in any country. The king gave them pensions, and decorated them with badges of honor.

Frank and the professor were dined at the royal palace, and the professor gave the royal personages an eloquent account of the voyage—and particularly of the rescue of the two Danish sailors from the ill-fated *Copenhagen*.

The king gave Frank a diamond cross as a mark of his esteem and admiration, and the freedom of the city was voted to him and the professor. The man of science was beside himself with joy over the honors that were showered upon him. He was not used to such ovations, and hardly knew how to act.

"Keep cool, professor," Frank would say to him. "Let 'em think we are used to such things. Let 'em see that an American citizen is as good as a king any day. We are all sovereigns in our own country, you know."

"Yes, that's so," said the man of science; "but you see, I never saw a real live king and queen before, and to be treated with such honor by them is enough to upset a plain American citizen."

"That's how you look upon it. As for me, I look at the man and not at the crown. The King of Denmark doesn't know half as much as *you do*, though he does wear a crown."

"Thanks for the compliment. I'll try not to think myself a bigger man than he is, though."

"Of course not. I would not have you do so. But at the same time, don't be afraid of him—don't get down on your belly and crawl in the dust at his feet just because he is a king. We'll leave to-morrow for Berlin, where the Emperor of Germany, Bismarck, Von Moltke, and others whose names are known the world over, will receive us. If we haven't found the Pole, we'll have a good time, all the same. We have been nearer to the Pole than anybody else who came back to tell about it."

Thus did Frank stiffen up the professor and make him forget his disappointment over the failure to reach the Pole.

At the appointed time our heroes took leave of the King and Queen of Denmark and the two sailors whom they had rescued from certain death. The two brave fellows shed tears as they shook hands with them.

The ascent of the ship was witnessed by the whole population of Copenhagen. As it went up, the vast sea of humanity below roared like the ocean in a storm.

At Berlin, Paris and London they received ovations such as no American citizens had ever received before. The whole European world rang with their names.

They left London and started across the Atlantic. In less than four days they came in sight of land off Halifax.

We shall not dwell on the great ovations that followed in the cities everywhere. Our hero was anxious to get back to his Western home and clasp his wife and child to his heart once more.

The professor was dropped outside of New York, and then, with Barney and Pomp, Frank struck out for Readstown. He was sure of a welcome there. Dear old Readstown! how glad he would be to see it once more! When it came in sight tears of joy dimmed his eyes.

Clasped in the loving embraces of father, mother, wife and child, we leave him, till greater deeds shall call him before the world again.

[THE END.]

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